

Literacy in Composition Studies

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LiCS MISSION STATEMENT

Literacy in Composition Studies is a refereed open access online journal that sponsors scholarly activity at the nexus of Literacy and Composition Studies. We foreground *literacy* and *composition* as our keywords because they do particular kinds of work. We want to retain Composition's complicated history as well as FYC's institutional location and articulation to secondary education. Through literacy, we denote practices that are both deeply context-bound and always ideological. Literacy and Composition are therefore contested terms that often mark where the struggles to define literate subjects and confer literacy's value are enacted. We are committed to publishing scholarship that explores literacy at its intersection with Composition's history, pedagogies, and interdisciplinary methods of inquiry.

Literacy is a fluid and contextual term. It can name a range of activities from fundamental knowledge about how to decode text to interpretive and communicative acts. Literacies are linked to know-how, to insider knowledge, and literacy is often a metaphor for the ability to navigate systems, cultures, and situations. At its heart, literacy is linked to interpretation—to reading the social environment and engaging and remaking that environment through communication. Orienting a Composition Studies journal around literacy prompts us to investigate the ways that writing is interpretive as well as persuasive; to analyze the connections and disconnections between writing and reading; and to examine the ways in which literacy acts on or constitutes the writer even as the writer seeks to act on or with others.

LiCS seeks submissions that interpret literacy at a time of radical transformation in its contexts and circulation. We are open to a wide range of research that takes up these issues, and we are especially interested in work that:

- provides provisional frameworks for theorizing literacy activities
- analyzes how literacy practices construct student, community, and other identities
- investigates the ways in which social, political, economic, and technological transformations produce, eliminate, or mediate literacy opportunities
- analyzes the processes whereby literacies are valued or legitimated
- examines the literacies sponsored through college writing courses and curricula, including the range of literate activities, practices, and pedagogies that shape and inform, enable and constrain writing
- considers the implications of institutional, state, or national policies on literacy learning and teaching, including the articulation of high schools and higher education
- proposes or creates opportunities for new interactions between Literacy and Composition Studies, especially those drawing on transnational and cross-cultural literacy research

Editors' Introduction to Issue 2.2

Literacy and Composition Studies scholarship has long been characterized by an attention to change. As the New Literacy Studies movement made clear, literacy is a situated, contextualized collection of practices that individuals and collectives activate in the process of communicating through symbols, texts, and technologies. As such, literacy is *emergent* and subject to a complex host of temporal and environmental factors, most notably, technological change, socioeconomic transformation and community metamorphosis. In this issue of *LiCS*, all of our contributions document and respond to the contextual transformations that shape literate action, emphasizing how our assumptions and stances to literacy change as legislation, technology, community, and capital morph over time.

Lisa Lebduska's "Literacy Sponsorship and The Post-9/11 G.I. Bill" charts permutations in literate activity over spans of dramatic upheaval and transformation. Challenging the hegemonic narrative of economic and social mobility made possible by the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, Lebduska argues that in an era of fast capitalism and knowledge-based economies, the government's role as literacy purveyor pushes veterans toward for-profit, competency-based institutions rather than traditional public institutions. Exploring numerous examples, Lebduska contends that by positioning veterans as literacy consumers, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill fails to deliver on its promise to function as an economically transformative agent, instead credentialing and reaffirming the worth of military experience at the expense of expanded literacy acquisition and enhanced democratic identity.

In "Hypersocial-Interactive Writing: An Audience of Readers-as-Writers," Rik Hunter revisits writer-centric notions of audience by emphasizing the hybrid literate identity of "readers-as-writers." Whereas social-turn scholarship in the era before social and digital media emphasized the writerly half of the audience dyad, Hunter argues that participatory media encourages writerly identity at least as much if not more than readerly identity. Drawing on audience scholarship, Hunter argues for a "hypersocial-interactive model of writing" that attempts to give equal treatment to the readerly and writerly literate identities in the age of digital communication. Pushing back against conceptions of audience articulated through "writing-about" or "responding-to" frameworks, Hunter invites us to rethink audience beyond the legacy of print, emphasizing how audiences make use of technological affordances and the social norms of virtual communities to become more active readers-as-writers. As reading technologies increasingly solicit collaborative interaction, Hunter proposes a valuable model of audience that takes into account the feedback mechanisms and peer-review processes that characterize digital literacy.

As Hunter reconfigures models of audience for digital writing, Michael Pennell prompts us to rethink one of the discipline's most revered and ubiquitous genres for the digital age in "(Re)Placing the Literacy Narrative: Composing in Google Maps." Pennell's reinvigorated literacy narrative assignment asks students to use Google Maps as a composing technology and interface in order to spatialize their literacy sponsorship; by "developing a visualization of the 'trade routes' students encountered in their literacy acquisition" the assignment provides one way to make the abstract concept of literacy sponsorship more concrete. By moving students from information consumption

to information production, Pennell's assignment revises the contours of the literacy narrative, creating new relations between sociospatiality and temporality and potentially disrupting linear narratives of literacy acquisition. In the process, "(Re)Placing the Literacy Narrative" reworks one of Composition's most cherished assignments.

In addition to Lebduska, Hunter and Pennell, two *Symposium* pieces continue our ongoing dialogue among previously published *LiCS* articles. In "Lean On: Collaboration and Struggle in Writing and Editing," Laurie JC Cella and Jessica Restaino explore what Morris Young calls "little narratives," or personal touchstones that sustain research agendas and motivate us to continue moving forward in the research process. Placing a special emphasis on the distributed work of email-based collaboration, Cella and Restaino provide invaluable reflection on collaborative authorship, friendship, and the demands of the tenure clock in their essay. In our second *Symposium* essay, "Literacy as a Legislative and Judicial Trope," Tabetha Adkins takes up Harvey J. Graff's critique that literacy studies "lack[s] adequate critical treatments of the contradictory place literacy holds in popular, school, familiar, and public cultures" by investigating the complex and often problematic treatment of literacy and literacy testing by the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS). Paying special attention to SCOTUS cases in 1915 and 1959, as well as the 2013 decision regarding The Voting Rights Act of 1965, Adkins identifies the shifting and at times contradictory understanding of literacy that attends Supreme Court decisions on voting rights.

These contributions have raised important questions for us regarding the contexts, implications, and teaching of literate activity. We hope they are as generative for our readers.

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Literacy Sponsorship and The Post-9/11 GI Bill

Lisa Lebduska Wheaton College

ABSTRACT

This essay argues that the Post-9/11 GI Bill (2008), despite its enormous scope, is failing those who need it to ascend in the economic order. The essay supports its position through a rhetorical analysis of several key texts connected to literacy relations between the US government and Post-9/11 veterans: a January 2001 press statement announcing the government's abandonment of higher education sponsorship; *America's Army*, a video game used to attract recruits; The American Council on Education's "Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services"; and the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Expanding Deborah Brandt's notion of "sponsorship" to include both purveyance (providing) and the government's right of purveyance, this essay explains how the Bill consolidates literacy, particularly through transferability, which allows experienced veterans (those serving or agreeing to serve for a decade) to transfer their education benefits to spouses or children. Initial data about GI Bill use indicate high veteran attendance at for-profit institutions with poor retention rates, veteran confusion in interpreting GI Bill benefits, and bureaucratic tangles resulting in benefit delays. The government did not begin tracking graduation rates of veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill until 2013, further evidence that military recruitment and political aggrandizement, rather than democratizing literacy, were the Bill's primary goals.

KEYWORDS

GI Bill, Post-9/11, sponsorship, purveyance, literacy, veterans

In 2011 the American Association of State Colleges and Universities named veterans' education the eighth most pressing issue affecting higher education (AAC&U), fueled by the anticipated influx of veterans entering college via the Post-9/11 GI Bill, officially known as the Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This Bill provides educational benefits to GIs and in some cases their spouses and dependents and is considered to be the most generous veteran education benefit package since World War II,[1] allowing for 36 months of full-time enrollment in post-secondary education (public or private) and, depending on a veteran's active duty status, a living stipend and book allowance (McBain). Within one year of the Bill's passage, 500,000 veterans had applied for education benefits certification, and over 300,000 had

enrolled in higher education institutions (Steele, Salcedo, and Coley). Congress revised the Bill in 2010, accelerating claims processing, extending benefits, and capping the amount offered for private school tuition at $17,500 annually.[2] US Veterans Affairs (VA) anticipates that, by 2018, the program will have cost the government $78.1 billion (US Government Accountability Office). The Bill would seem to be the inheritor of a legacy of opportunity, social access, and government largesse.

Read within the context of a knowledge economy, however, the benefits conferred by the Post-9/11 GI Bill interpellate the veteran as literacy consumer in an education marketplace designed to favor those who have already gained access. The promise of the Bill—the potential to provide higher education, skills, educational choice, and ultimately social mobility—is being deflected as too many veterans are unable to access and/or convert their awards into an education that allows them to make lasting positive changes in their lives. As war has become a matter of successful recruitment tactics and incentivizing, educational access represented by the Post-9/11 GI Bill has become the reward for risking health and life. For some, military service may be the only apparent route to social access and opportunity, and "educational body" acquires a literal significance. Military individuals, accustomed to never leaving their comrades behind and returning to a country dedicated, presumably, to "no child left behind" now face the risk of being closed out—in effect left behind—in a race to compete.

In this essay I examine several key texts connected to literacy relations between the government and Post-9/11 veterans: a press statement in January 2001 announcing the government's abandonment of higher education sponsorship; *America's Army*, a video game used to attract recruits; the Post-9/11 GI Bill; and The American Council on Education's "Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services." I provide a rhetorical analysis of these texts to establish the military's initial lack of interest in soldier and veteran literacy and its subsequent return to literacy purveyance as a way to attract recruits with varying literacy needs—those seeking higher education, as well as those seeking to transfer literacy benefits to family members. Finally, I argue that the Bill is failing those who need it to ascend in the economic order and is instead functioning to consolidate literacy among those who have already accessed higher education. This kind of sponsorship, I argue, constitutes both the act of purveying and the government's right of purveyance.

THE GI BILL AND A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The Post-9/11 GI Bill sits within a constellation of literacy relations between veterans and the government. "Literacy" involves a broader range of skills and contexts than it did seventy years ago, the result of changing technologies, changing social contexts, and changing ideas about meaning itself (Brandt, *American Lives*; George; Kress; Selfe[3]). Deborah Brandt explains that literacy has often been understood as a source of stability—a way of making sense of the world, of participating in it, and of being employable; however, literacy today is also "valuable—and volatile—property" (*American Lives* 3). Brandt situates literacy at the center of the knowledge economy, describing it as "one of the great engines of profit and competitive advantage in the twentieth century . . . a lubricant for consumer desire, a means for integrating corporate markets, a foundation for the deployment of weapons and other technology, a raw material in the mass production of information" (*American*

Lives 18). As Brandt notes, literacy is also a means of exacerbating social inequity, as the requirements for what constitutes "literacy" continue to escalate, and fewer people have access to the full gamut of literacy opportunities.

"Stuck in the Sand," a blog by a Desert Storm veteran suffering from PTSD and struggling to finish college, describes the literacy imperatives produced by a knowledge economy:

> It used to be that you could find a job to keep you fed, clothed, and housed without some sort of degree. A high school diploma was enough for some jobs. My Dad worked in a truck frame factory for most of his life, and retired with a decent pension and health insurance. He didn't go to college. He did, however, start working there in the 1960's. . . . The important part here is that walking away from a university, technical college, or trade school grants you a temporary reprieve, but doesn't solve the problem of school being hard to manage. You still need an education of some sort. (8 July 2011)

The anonymous writer (screen name: airmanopus), struggling not to "wash out" (drop out) of college, articulates the considerable gap of possibility between his father's experience and his own. Like Jack May in Deborah Brandt's study (*American Lives* 92-98), he must keep pace with an economy that demands increased literacy, or he will find himself "stuck"—slowed to a point that prohibits his survival. Moreover, the writer acknowledges that such survival is not simply a matter of gaining access; school is "hard to manage," so access to formal education is only one component of what one needs to obtain food, clothing, and shelter. While his father survived in a nascent knowledge economy, the son is entering a different economic order in which the knowledge stakes are higher and more complex and in which the government is not doing enough to provide him with a path forward.

The US military has had a long and complex association with literacy, impacting its definition, measurement, and teaching through an ever-tightening bond with technology (Brandt, "Drafting" 495). By the end of the nineteenth century, advancements in manufacturing produced mass-market periodicals and books offering self-improvement, self-knowledge, and affordable, accessible leisure reading, which served as commodified replacements for a declining religious sensibility via a "therapeutic ethos" (Lears). At the same time, mandatory, tax-funded schooling and the Morill Act's establishment of land grant universities (Thelin) positioned the government as a literacy provider. The government expanded this knowledge economy during World War II through the military's development of computer technologies (Drucker 25) and the GI Bill, which aimed at incentivizing veterans to attain higher education and enter the workforce as quickly as possible with advanced degrees. Peter Drucker contends that the GI Bill heralded a significant change in the state's role from "provider" to "*manager*": the government did not run the colleges or control either veterans' choice of college or colleges' acceptance of veterans (122-23, emphasis added). This managerial role also meant that the Bill did not address barriers related to race (Bound and Turner; Onkst[4]) or gender (Daniel Clark; Fox-Genovese; Hartmann; Solomon[5]), and, as Keith Olson has concluded, despite its role in individual transformations,[6] the Bill actually achieved very little overall educational reform (610). The Post-9/11 GI Bill appears to be similarly poised.

PRE-9/11 RECRUITING AND ITS ANTI-EDUCATION APPEAL

Understanding the context of the Post-9/11 GI Bill requires an understanding of the military-literacy climate immediately preceding it. Prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the desire for expedience played a role in establishing the military as a competitor against literacy. For a few months, the military appeared to abandon the literacy marketplace. During a January 2001 press conference, Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera announced that the Army had missed its recruiting goals three times in the previous six years, falling short "by tens of thousands of soldiers" (US Department of Defense), and that it would be abandoning any form of literacy appeal. Caldera explained: "We are not selling money for college. We are selling how the Army strengthens you as an individual." The Department of Defense (DOD) realized this shift from literacy to self by hiring advertising agencies that targeted under-represented groups in higher education: Leo Burnett Worldwide and their partners, which Caldera announced as Cartel Creativo, "a Spanish language-oriented firm—Hispanic-owned firm," and "IMAGES USA, an African-American-owned firm" (US Department of Defense). The DOD established a $150 million annual advertising budget aimed at recruitment. Caldera explained that a new campaign would present the army as a "door-opening opportunity that will strengthen [recruits] mentally, morally, physically, by virtue of the training that [they] will get." He noted that "Be all you can be," the former slogan, was rejected for giving the impression that it was "telling" young people what to do. By contrast, the new campaign, "An Army of One," had "the concept of teamwork … that with training, with technology, with support, who I am is better than who I was." The campaign included brief biographies of soldiers of all races and both genders, selected for their relatability (US Department of Defense).

With this campaign, the Army no longer sold the promise of higher education; it instead claimed a direct path to self-improvement predicated, in part, on technological adroitness. Caldera would go on to draw the lines of the marketplace more starkly by suggesting that

> [t]he real competition for recruits is not the hot economy, it's higher education. Three-quarters of high school graduates are going to higher education. That's why we've done things like improve our in-service education programs through Army University Access Online, our Distance Education Program for soldiers, because we want to communicate a message that says, "You can learn while you serve." (US Department of Defense)

The army was positioned to out-compete higher education by delivering a finished product to the marketplace more quickly: the self-satisfied individual who had experienced what Min-Zhan Lu refers to as a "standardized template of selfhood" that prevented him or her from registering the contradictions of his or her own education ("An Essay" 44). The Army strategized to edge out literacy competition (higher education) by offering a faster route to gratification. Nine months before al-Qaeda's attacks on the US, Caldera established the Army and by extension the military as a competitor for literacy consumers.

The campaign's reliance on immediacy ("who I am") as opposed to emergence ("be all you can be") played to the principles of fast capitalism. Caldera outlined the mindset of the army's target

audience: "They want to know how does being in the Army benefit me today, how does it benefit me now, not how does it benefit my country or how will it benefit me when I'm 50 or 60 and looking back at the course of my life; how does it benefit me today" (qtd. in US Department of Defense). If literacy requires a cumulative process of skills acquisition, Caldera's announcement was the ultimate anti-literacy appeal. In that press conference, Caldera simultaneously invoked the individual as commodity (raw material to be shaped into finished product) and consumer, poised to barter for the finished product of the self. The pitch emphasized immediate gratification rather than long-term investment or achievement. This campaign publicly established the military's priorities far afield from the long-range literacy futures of its soldiers.

"The very qualities that make literacy malleable and open to re-appropriation by individuals . . . also make it available for institutions[;] institutional diversion allowed the government to capitalize on individuals' literacies and advance an ideology normalizing war."

The Army's recruitment campaign appropriated and redirected recruits' existing literacies. As part of its Army-branding efforts, the Leo Burnett agency created *America's Army*,[7] a video game that users could download for free in exchange for their email addresses. The game was not released for download until a year after the September 11 attacks, when enrollments were still high, driven by renewed patriotism. Purporting to simulate army life, the game was designed to minimize graphic gore so that it would receive a "T" for teen rating, allowing it to reach both those old enough to enroll and their younger siblings. The very qualities that make literacy malleable and open to re-appropriation by individuals (as when literacy skills learned on the job are then used to further personal interests and aspirations) also make it available for institutions. This institutional diversion allowed the government to capitalize on individuals' literacies and advance an ideology normalizing war.

America's Army featured shooting simulations that provided authentic sound and practice in aiming, firing, and reloading, thus diverting gaming literacy to embrace a version of military life as fast-paced, exciting, and endlessly entertaining. The game joined a genre of training video games that, as Galloway notes, are "skill-builders in a utilitarian sense or simply instructive of a larger militaristic ideology." Via this game, the government offered instruction, forwarded an ideology, and altered its sponsorship to accompany what Brandt might describe as a "transformation in literacy" (*American Lives* 85). The video game skills and motivation that recruits bring to the game are transformed into a literacy about warfare that constitutes war as a combination of shooting skill and adrenaline bursts without bodily or material sacrifice. This particular literacy teaches war as a text devoid of tedium, physical and psychological stress, and moral complexity.

Against and despite these recruitment efforts, quantity and/or quality enrollments[8] in several branches of the armed services declined from 2005-2007 (Kapp). The self wasn't selling, and the military needed to return to purveying literacy. In 2008, Congress passed the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which was described by the RAND Corporation as "a vital renewal of the nation's commitment

to US service members" that would "help ease the transition from combat to civilian life" (Steele, Salcedo and Coley). Whereas the original GI Bill rewarded the military service of "citizen soldiers" (Mettler)—those who had been drafted—the Post-9/11 GI Bill was used as a recruitment tool in an all-volunteer army. A key component of this Bill was "transferability," through which a service member with at least ten years of service (or six years served and a commitment for an additional four years) could pass his or her benefits to a spouse or child. Service members most likely seeking to transfer the benefit would be those who already had obtained the education and skills they sought. This particular benefit offered a consolidation of literacy within families—that is, it was directed at those who had already accessed higher education. Because it could be transferred, it was not necessarily "easing the transition" from combat to civilian life for the soldiers who had served. Moreover, it was not necessarily equipping soldiers with the literacy skills needed to succeed in a post-Fordist, fast capitalist economy in which successful "people possess amalgams of flexible skills that can be transported and transformed to changing contexts as need arises" (Gee 61). The terms "post-Fordist" and "fast capitalist" both warrant some unpacking, which I do below, within the context of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

POST-9/11 VETERANS AND POST-CAPITALISM

While World War II veterans were the forebears of the relationship among technology, knowledge and marketplace education, Post- 9/11 veterans are its direct descendants. In understanding the economic context facing veterans like the "Stuck in the Sand" blogger, "post-Fordist" and "fast capitalist" are useful concepts to contrast against the economic order inhabited by the original GI Bill veterans, but they have limitations. As Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu, drawing on the work of Ulrich Beck, have argued, "post-Fordist" connotes a simple trajectory in which the Fordist assembly-line, service-oriented systems are relics of the past (117), replaced by the "flattened hierarchy" in which multi-skills have supplanted compartmentalized work-skills (New London Group 11). Lu and Horner caution that "we need to be vigilant toward the tendency to project any neat, linear, monolithic progression of a clear, complete sharp break from an older to a newer economy, culture, and attendant sensibilities" (124). Despite this warning, it is nonetheless clear that Internet technologies, for example, have changed the nature of literacy. Today's veterans compose web pages, blogs, and Twitter feeds. Compared to veterans of other wars, Post-9/11 veterans have greater access to means of telling their own stories. While television brought the Vietnam War via journalists into civilians' living rooms, the Internet can bring Iraq and Afghanistan veterans into their lives. A search of "veteran" in the blog search engine Blogsearchengine.org yields 34,600,000 results of blogs by or about veterans addressing such topics as education, military life, readjustment, homelessness, employment, physical health, and mental health.[9] The presence of these digital compositions indicate both that information about veterans' lives is ubiquitous and that the veterans who write them participate in self-sponsored writing independent of institutional involvement as they engage what Brandt terms the "real" economy of writing, which is "socially useful to them and others, on its own terms" ("Afterword" 775).

But the liberating potential of social media and other technological affordances has not

necessarily been realized in today's economy. Individual workplaces and even individual positions contain a mix of Fordist and post-Fordist elements. Locked inside the post-Fordist economy, human workers continue to staff assembly production lines and service-centered jobs, such as those in the fast food and cleaning industries. Even as they take breaks to read cell phone messages or return home to update their blogs, today's veterans may very well find themselves employed in assembly line jobs with no health care and little promise of advancement. Although Post-9/11 veterans work, learn, and seek education in a changed landscape, many of the constraints surrounding social mobility remain.

Like "post-Fordist," the phrase "fast capitalism" presents its own occlusions, suggesting an economic order in which all interactions occur at lightning speeds. However, while certain elements of life have accelerated, conditions in some contexts are painfully slow. Since its passage, the Post-9/11 GI Bill has been plagued with a backlog of claims processing. In what one analyst described as a "surreal" event, several information technologies within the V.A. did not interface with each other, forcing claims to be filed manually and slowing their processing so that by September 2009 the V.A. had processed only 188,000 of the 260,000 claims it had received (McBain). Claims backlogs mean delays in veterans' ability to purchase books or pay rent or tuition; in short, delayed claims can mean non-attendance, a slowing or even complete stoppage of the education the Bill was intended to provide. But the demand for speed on the part of workers—if they are to secure or maintain their employment—remains. The speed element of the current economic order is a conflicted one—"fast" at some moments but slow at others.

LITERACY SPONSORSHIP VERSUS LITERACY PURVEYANCE

On the face of it, the Post-9/11 GI Bill appears to be another instance of what Deborah Brandt refers to as "literacy sponsorship" (*American Lives* 19; "Sponsors of Literacy"), a process through which an agent can both enable and suppress access to literacy. As Brandt uses the term, "sponsorship" allows an agent to cultivate a literacy skill-set for its own purposes, as when the US military needed literate armed forces to understand and operate increasingly complex war technologies. "Sponsorship" and its attendant concepts are particularly useful for examining many of the literacy relations between the government and veterans. The literacy relationship between the government and veterans via the Post-9/11 GI Bill, however, is less direct than it is in most instances of sponsorship, in which an agent cultivates literacies that are used in furthering its aims. By contrast, the Bill does not foster literacy skills that are necessarily used for military service. Military service provides value that is exchanged for a promise of literacy via the Bill. The Bill signifies literacy deferred, exchanged, and

"The literacy relationship between the government and veterans via the Post-9/11 GI Bill, however, is less direct than it is in most instances of sponsorship, in which an agent cultivates literacies that are used in furthering its aims. [...] The Bill signifies literacy deferred, exchanged, and in some cases transferred, as when the Bill is used to attract highly literate individuals who transfer Bill benefits to family members."

in some cases transferred, as when the Bill is used to attract highly literate individuals who transfer Bill benefits to family members. Military service in and of itself does not produce the literacies promised by the Bill. To account for these differences in literacy sponsorship, and the exchange-value of the Bill, I adapt Brandt's notion of literacy "sponsorship" to include a sub-category that I refer to as literacy "purveyance," drawing upon both the contemporary usage of "purvey" as in *to provide*, and the historical use of "purveyance" to indicate the act of procuring goods for a sovereign at a price established by that sovereign. In the thirteenth century, purveyance was a royal right allowing the Crown to set the price of goods that it purchased so that it could cheaply clothe and feed armies, in a sense forcing the farmers and peasants selling those goods to subsidize military aggression. The act of purveying and the right of purveyance—related but different—help to frame the GI Bill's use in attracting veterans with differing literacy interests. Some use the Bill to pursue vocational training, some use it to pursue advanced degrees, and others transfer the benefits to a spouse or child.

MILITARY SERVICE AS LITERACY PURVEYANCE

To purvey a good or service is to provide it for a price. A grocer, for example, purveys foodstuffs for money. Similarly, the government purveys literacy through the GI Bill for the price of military service. Unlike the on-the-job literacy training afforded by the early print shops Brandt examined, contemporary military service does not produce the literacies enabled by the GI Bill. Instead, via the Bill, military personnel trade their services for the promise of a future, undetermined form of literacy. Recruits provide labor and risk their lives in exchange for the promise of a higher education or vocational training credential that they can access after they have completed their service. In this instance, the government has provided (purveyed) literacy for the price of service. But in other instances, the government is also purchasing literacy at a price it determines. Chapter 33, the 2010 amendment to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, allowed those who had served six years and agreed to serve for an additional four years to transfer their benefits to spouses or dependent children. This version of the Bill was aimed at retaining experienced military personnel. At one point, Congress debated offering this transferability benefit only to those in "difficult to fill" military specialties (Carden), an idea that ultimately was rejected but that nonetheless speaks to the anti-democratic impulses at work in the Capitol. The Bill's transferability acts as a literacy purveyance mechanism in which the government, as sovereign, acquires the literate skills of veterans for its war efforts, and the transferability of GI Bill benefits are the price at which such skills are purchased.

The struggle over who has access to GI Bill literacy is most evident in Kafkaesque[10] contestations over eligibility, as the Bill has undergone successive modifications to determine who qualifies for financial support (which veterans and/or which of their relatives), the amount for which they qualify, what the support may be used for, and the length of time for which support can be requested. The informal discourse said to characterize the fast capitalist workplace has not been employed in the legal language of the Bill, and thirty-eight percent of surveyed veterans reported that they struggle to understand their benefits options (Steele, Salcedo, and Coley). They lack the literacy needed to fully access the subsidy available to them. Moreover, the official systems put in place to help veterans

understand their benefits in some instances can do little to translate. As one analyst put it, "the VA does not always speak the same language as the higher education community" (McBain).

Under the initial Post-9/11 GI Bill, for example, colleges' tuition and fees were separated, though colleges themselves typically bill tuition and fees together. Because the Bill allowed veterans to receive the highest tuition and fees within their states of residence, a veteran's tuition rate might be based on tuition at one institution and his or her fee rate might be based on another. One analyst cited the largest discrepancy as occurring in Utah, where in the 2009-2010 academic year $208.86 was the maximum tuition charge per credit hour, but $63,576.50 was the maximum fee payment rate. Moreover, "in states such as California 'fees' is commonly and legislatively used to mean 'tuition'" (McBain). This disconnect means that the fundamental question of "what does a college education cost?" is unclear, both to veterans and to those who would assist them.

A similar disconnect occurred when the Bill was revised to allow states more autonomy in interpretation. The initial version of the Bill allowed veterans to receive free tuition at any public college or university. Under Chapter 33 (passed in 2010 and implemented in 2011), eligibility became more complicated, with veterans able to receive public assistance in their states of residence. "Residence" became a loaded term, as each state was allowed to determine the meaning of "residency," and out-of-state veterans and public universities were expected to pay the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition. Only some states provided subsidies to cover this gap, and veterans like Hayleigh Perez found themselves caught in the legislative change, as well as the conflicted meaning of "resident," as the federal government held fast to its role as literacy manager.

Perez enlisted in 2005, under the first iteration of the Bill, which allowed veterans to go to any public university in the US. She served for four years, was discharged in 2009, and in 2011 applied to The University of North Carolina at Pembroke and Fayetteville State in North Carolina. By that time, the GI Bill benefit laws had changed, and veterans were eligible to receive only in-state resident tuition and fees. Fayetteville declared Perez to be an in-state resident, but Pembroke decided she was an out-of-state resident. Perez owned a house, had paid property tax, and had been registered to vote in North Carolina since 2008, but when her husband, also in the military, was transferred to Texas, she had moved with him. The state of North Carolina determined that Perez was not an in-state resident because she had been living in Texas for two years. Perez, through the Student Veteran Advocacy Group, sued the UNC Board of Governors (Breed). Military personnel are frequently reassigned and transferred from state to state, and the definitions of "resident" vary from state to state. "Residency" is a murky area, but it is tied to thousands of education dollars for veterans seeking to attend public institutions. Conflict and confusion over residency within the states, themselves, abounds. For Perez and others in similar situations, the government's sponsorship post-service necessitates an understanding of legislative discourse at both the federal and state levels. The sponsorship here is contingent and ever-changing as the Bill undergoes further modification.

The government's decision to appeal to recruits by emphasizing a sponsorship of educational choice meant that veterans had to possess consumer literacy in educational resources. In addition to the higher education choices of the past, veterans now may also choose among online degrees, certificates, and an array of for-profit institutions. The wide range of options reinforces the Janus

face of the Bill: on one side, the freedom and flexibility of options; on the other, the risk of choosing poorly. For the civilian middle-class student, choice often involves a squadron of formal and informal advisers including guidance counselors, teachers, friends, siblings, and parents, as well as a "family economy" of values and past experiences (Brandt, *American Lives* 87). For veterans, choice involves geographic proximity, veterans' familiarity with the college, and the degree to which the college is perceived as being "veteran friendly." In response, the government positions itself as a consumer education coach, announcing on its GI Bill Facebook page that "[t]he Federal Trade Commission has got your back! Check out their helpful new guide that provides 8 questions to ask when choosing a college" (The Post-9/11 GI Bill, 5 December 2013). With this post, the government sanctions the education marketplace as a battlefield. College offerings now constitute an arena in which veterans must be wary consumers, in need of someone to have their backs, while the government protects them through coaching.

These lessons in literacy consumerism seem not to have taken hold, however, as fast literacy continues to dominate veterans' literacy experiences through the Bill. The GI Bill's Facebook page explains: "The GI Bill can provide you with up to 36 months of benefits. It's enough time to get a degree but you do have to strategize to make the most of your benefits. . . Make sure you get that diploma or certificate and have something to show for the time you put in" (The Post 9/11 GI Bill, 16 July 2013). For-profit institutions use various marketing strategies to connect with veterans through appeals to immediacy: a greater proportion of veterans attend for-profit institutions, which include online colleges such as DeVry and the University of Phoenix, than their civilian peers. Nineteen percent of students using GI Bill benefits are enrolled in for-profit institutions, as opposed to six percent of all college students (Field). Field notes that "[t]he reverse holds true for private, nonprofit colleges, with 20 percent of all students enrolling at those institutions compared with just 6 percent of GI-Bill students attending one of the top-500 colleges." Under the initial iteration of the Post-9/11 Bill, provided benefits were only sufficient to cover community college education costs in full; by comparison, benefits would cover seventy-three percent at four-year public institutions and thirty-one percent at four-year private colleges (Field). The 2011 versions of the Bill were designed to close some of that gap, but the effects of those efforts remain to be seen. Of the 500 institutions enrolling the greatest number of veterans, only three are private nonprofits, and none belong to the Association of American Universities, an organization of leading research universities in the US and Canada (Field). Furthermore, as Wick Sloane observes, there are relatively few veterans enrolled in the nation's most elite colleges. College choice for veterans, as for an increasing number of students, enacts Brandt's argument that "access [to literacy has become] contingent and pragmatic" ("Drafting" 497). My point here is not that private four-year institutions necessarily offer a "better" education but that the Bill does not confer the seemingly broad access it would appear to; the government, again, is not actually providing education but is instead purveying it.

While defining what a "better" education might consist of is beyond the scope of this essay, it is nevertheless reasonable to expect that colleges' completion rates must figure into that understanding, particularly when students are taking out loans to attend. Unfortunately, colleges with poorer graduation rates are garnering a larger share of GI Bill funding. According to the National Center for

Education Statistics, in 2008 for-profit colleges graduated "22 percent of their first-time, fulltime students seeking bachelor's degrees, compared with 55 percent at public institutions and 65 percent at nonprofit private universities" (Golden). Furthermore, "only 36 percent of their students repay the loans, compared with at least 54 percent at traditional colleges, according to an analysis of government data by the Institute for College Access & Success, a nonprofit group in Oakland, California" (Golden). The government has attempted to reduce the high default rate and poor performances of these institutions, and at least one for-profit college in Westwood, Texas, is under investigation. Clearly, though, the economy of literacy is allowing some to profit substantially. At the same time, veterans pursuing their education at for-profit institutions risk becoming casualties when the government, as Brandt puts it, attempts "to speed up the race, not equalize the pace" ("Drafting" 500), creating a fast literacy that does little to help those trapped in its spokes. In the post World War II era, increased educational access created a paradoxical bulwark against complaint: by producing a shortage of space, the large numbers of students applying to college made veterans and non-veterans alike so grateful to have won coveted places that they did not protest. Faculty, for the most part, shouldered increased loads as their own patriotic contribution. The expansion of the education marketplace, including the proliferation of online opportunities, has rendered much of this paradox invisible. While some online education is delivered responsibly and expands educational opportunities for thousands of students, some of it (as with traditional offerings) is far less responsible. Additionally, the availability of education that is just a click away augments the ease and urgency of choosing, and increased pressure to enter the workforce as quickly as possible—a factor of veterans' age and social class—may mean that expedience plays a significant role in choice.

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The government has addressed the demand for fast literacy by encouraging veterans to seek education credit for their military experiences, again purveying literacy. The American Council on Education publishes the "Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services," which provides credit guidelines for military occupations and courses. The Guide, which has been published in one form or another since 1946, contains detailed descriptions of the duties and skills required of each occupation, along with recommendations for the amount of academic credit colleges should award. Veterans are encouraged to consult the guide, look up their military work and courses, and then seek credit for them at the colleges they attend. The description for aviation machinists' mates, for example, notes that they "maintain aircraft engines and their related systems" and then specifies skills ranging from the ability to inspect, repair and replace engines, as well as the ability to use Microsoft Suite software. Depending on the rank achieved within this enlisted occupation, the Guide recommends that colleges award 12-17 semester hours in a lower-division/associate degree category and confer additional credits in maintenance management, human resources management,

computer applications, and management in the upper-division baccalaureate degree category (American Council on Education). In these instances, the military has purveyed literacy, providing it to soldiers; the Bill then transforms that literacy into college credit via the Guide. The kind and function of literacy veterans receive is prescribed by their military experience, emphasizing service, adherence to authority, and skills tied to the military technology of the moment. Officers' work generally qualifies for more advanced and/or more kinds of credit than the occupations and rank of enlisted personnel, so the awarding of credits signifying literacy consolidates advantage around those who already have it.

The kinds of military experiences included in the Guide have increased over the years, with the military itself racing to keep pace with its own rapidly changing literacy needs, as the Guide notes:

> The 1974 edition of the Guide marked the beginning of the publication of biennial editions of the Guide through computerized composition, continual staff review of courses, and the computerized storage of course information for a more rapid updating of credit recommendations. In 1994, the computerized Guide system came in house, with all data managed by the Military Evaluations Program staff. (American Council on Education)

The function of college is reduced to that of credentialing agent, and the GI Bill simply fuels the act of re-affirming the worth of military experience. Literacy itself becomes a casualty in the economic order of fast literacy, as the rush to get in and get out—underscored by the Bill's coverage of 36 months of higher education—favors those who enter college with the skills needed to succeed. For those who need more time to adapt and or to acquire the skills they need, the pressure to finish quickly disadvantages them.

Verifiable empirical evidence about the Post-9/11 GI Bill and veteran social mobility through higher education does not yet exist. Veteran college completion rates would seem a likely place to start, but initial data were questionable. Although an eighty-eight percent college dropout rate among veterans was reported by MSNBC and widely circulated by other news organizations such as *The Huffington Post* (Wood), the report itself was challenged by veterans' groups and news organizations. The original report relied on a report from the University of Colorado Denver, which cited a March 22, 2012 study by the Colorado Workforce Development Council, but the Council has removed the report; the eighty-eight percent statistic does not appear to have any other source (Tarantino). In April 2013, the VA, Department of Defense, and the Department of Education began tracking graduation rates of veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill. It is worth noting that in an age of surveillance and information this evidence of literacy sponsorship was not gathered sooner. The government has not had an interest in this information quite possibly because the Bill has done its one and only job: bringing people to military service, at the price established by the government.

CONCLUSION

While numerous veterans have testified to the success brought to them via the GI Bill, their achievements should not obviate the responsibility of the government to educate its citizens equitably. Brandt poses exactly what is at stake: "the new economic order presents American literacy educators

with a much bigger agenda than increasing the productivity of future workers. From all angles—policy to pedagogy—literacy needs to be addressed in a civil rights context" (*American Lives* 206). She encourages everyone to ask not what responsibility educators and students have to the economy, but what responsibility the economy has to educators. Veterans and those who support them are attempting to create their own multiliterate spaces to thwart the effects of fast literacy and to bring a pluralistic understanding of war to civilian life. Whether these nodes and networks of knowledge and representation ultimately succeed at providing educational access remains to be seen. It would be a cruel irony if those who fought under the banner of democracy were to find themselves denied equitable access to the literacy on which such democracy depends.

NOTES

[1] The GI Bill was revised in 1984 by Gillespie V. Montgomery, a former Mississippi congressman; in 1987 it received a permanent designation and was renamed the Montgomery GI Bill (Greenberg).

[2] The Post-9/11 GI Bill contains a myriad of caveats and complexities regarding the kinds and lengths of military service; program eligibility; and stipends for books, living expenses, and certification-related expenses. For a comprehensive explanation of these details, consult the US Department of Government Affairs "Post-9/11 GI Bill" (http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/ post911_gibill.asp). The 2010 revision of the Bill is often referred to as "Chapter 33." In 2014, the House of Representatives passed the "GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2014," which requires all states receiving GI Bill education payments to charge all veterans in-state tuition rates. This Bill is currently in the Senate" (United States). For the purposes of this essay, I will use "Post- 9/11 GI Bill" to designate all versions of the Bill, unless the distinction is relevant to a particular argument.

[3] The literature on literacy and technology spans decades. In addition to the authors listed, see *Handbook of Research on New Literacies*, edited by Julie Coiro, Michele Knobel, Colin Lankshear, and Donald J. Leu. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008.

[4] Across the country, black veterans were still barred from attending many colleges; it was not until the Brown versus the Topeka Board of Education decision of 1954 that black veterans could attend colleges that had been accepting other GIs under the Bill since its inception.

[5] Daniel Clark explains that, despite their eligibility, women attended college in fewer numbers during the height of the GI Bill. Although women veterans were entitled to the same benefits as men, men were given acceptance over women at some colleges as seats became increasingly scarce (186). For further discussion of the GI Bill's impact on women, see Fox-Genovese, "Mixed Messages: Women and the Impact of World War II"; Solomon, *In The Company of Educated Women: A History of Women in Higher Education in America*; and Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940's*.

[6] For accounts of individual success with the GI Bill, see Mettler, who offers numerous rich narratives connecting the GI Bill to the formation of "citizen soldiers."

[7] Since its launch, *America's Army* has been downloaded more than 40 million times, setting five records in *Guinness World Records: Gamer's Edition 2009*.

[8] "Quality" pertains to individuals without prior military service and is based on high school graduation and scores on the AFQT, Armed Forces Qualifications Test.

[9] It is difficult to obtain an exact count of only those blogs written by veterans about their war and post-war experiences; the figure I offer includes blogs describing veterans' benefits that are not necessarily composed by veterans.

[10] My thanks to the reviewers for suggesting this adjective.

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Hypersocial-Interactive Writing: An Audience of Readers-As-Writers

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ABSTRACT

This article theorizes the development of a hybrid literate identity—one of both reader and writer. That is, prior to the emergence of social and digital media, the act of meaning-making in models of audience and writing developed in or emerging from the social turn in composition were more heavily dependent on the writer. Based on analysis of wiki talk pages, I describe a model of writing that accounts for "readers-as-writers." Consequently, this article builds upon audience scholarship to develop a "hypersocial-interactive model of writing" to help us to better understand possible reader and writer roles in digital writing environments.

KEYWORDS

audience, authorship, collaboration, collaborative writing, digital writing, literacy, literacy sponsorship, participatory culture, wiki

It is becoming abundantly clear that a shift in literate identity parallels developments in new media as people both young and old move into online communities populated with writers. Indeed, we all are increasingly called upon to write in a variety of contexts and to a variety of audiences, and how we teach and discuss audience should account for the emerging ways meaning is negotiated via the newly possible reader/writer relationships that we encounter through new media. Wikis are one location of literate activity where we can observe what is, in the words of Andrea Lunsford, "a literacy revolution the likes of which we haven't seen since Greek civilization" (Lunsford qtd in Thompson). Informed by my use of a discourse analytic approach (Gee) to examine roughly 120,000 words of written collaborative talk by more than 500 Wowpedia community members about the writing of 12 featured articles, I offer sample case studies that strongly suggest the need for a new model of audience.

Like other rhetorical concepts in the discipline, audience occasionally surfaces as a major concern; accordingly, conceptions of audience shift with changing scholarly epistemologies. Current models, developed in and emerging from the social turn in composition, remain

essential to our understanding of audience and specifically important to the model I suggest in this essay. As Martin Nystrand, Stuart Greene, and Jeffrey Wiemelt note, we have increasingly viewed texts as sites of interaction and described writing and reading processes as fundamentally social activities. This insight remains central to our understanding, as at each juncture we refine our conception of audience, more and more decentralizing the writer as the sole arbiter of meaning. Yet the case is that, more often than not, audience continues to be consigned to what I call "writing-about" or "responding-to" frameworks.

That is, our audience scholarship most often indicates that, from the writer's perspective, audience is something written to and for; similarly, from the position of audience, readers can become writers by responding to and writing about what others have written. For example, in their oft-cited landmark 1984 article, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked" (AA/AI), Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford made strides in offering a model for defining audience that accounts for its "richness" (156) by placing past models of audience into two rubrics that represented composition and rhetoric's central perspectives: audience addressed and audience invoked.

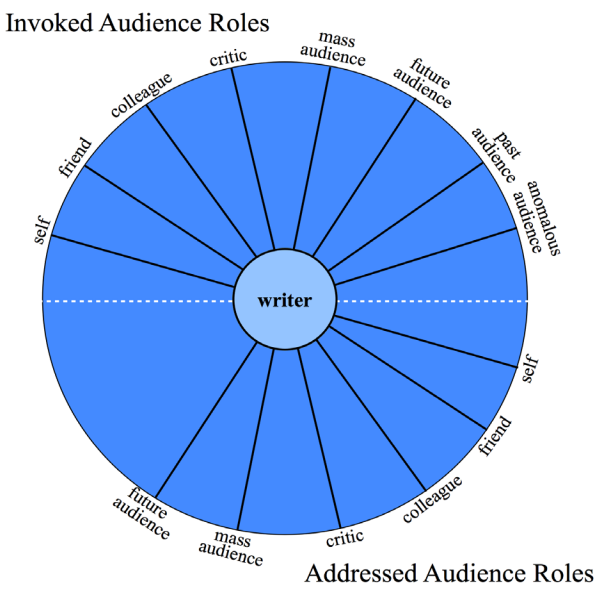


Fig. 1. Ede & Lunsford's Concept of Audience.

While ultimately complicating both perspectives to synthesize a concept of audience that accounts for the various roles audience might take on, Ede and Lunsford's representation of audience emphasizes a writer who "both analyze[s] and invent[s] an audience" (163) and "establishes the range of potential roles an audience may play" (165-66). Even when writers respond to readers, writers interpret suggestions and may choose to incorporate them or not. The writer still has ultimate authority over the text. The writer is literally at the center of attention (see Figure 1). With all the possible audience roles available to readers, meaning still primarily moves from the writer through the text to the reader.

In the late 1990s, Robert Johnson worked explicitly to counter such writer-centric models and to describe an alternative strategy to ensure writer/reader convergence, specifically within the context of technical communications and usability testing. Johnson explains that in his "Audience-Involved"

model, users can play a vital role in the process of writing technical documents (e.g., instruction guides).

With the development of new writing technologies, allowing for new kinds of texts and new kinds of relations between readers and writers, come new literacies and new literate identities. What my research of wikified-writing shows is that reading and writing on Wowpedia shares features of Johnson's model; it is certainly not writer-centric. On the contrary, Wowpedia often involves a process of learning to be both reader and writer of articles through a process of enculturation that for the most part happens on "Talk" pages, the tab nested behind the "Article" page we see when visiting Wikipedia, for instance (see Figure 2). Consequently, the conditions of this wiki-mediated writing calls for a model of writing that can be used to describe and theorize audience as it manifests on wikis—one that is not constrained by the legacy of print. In other

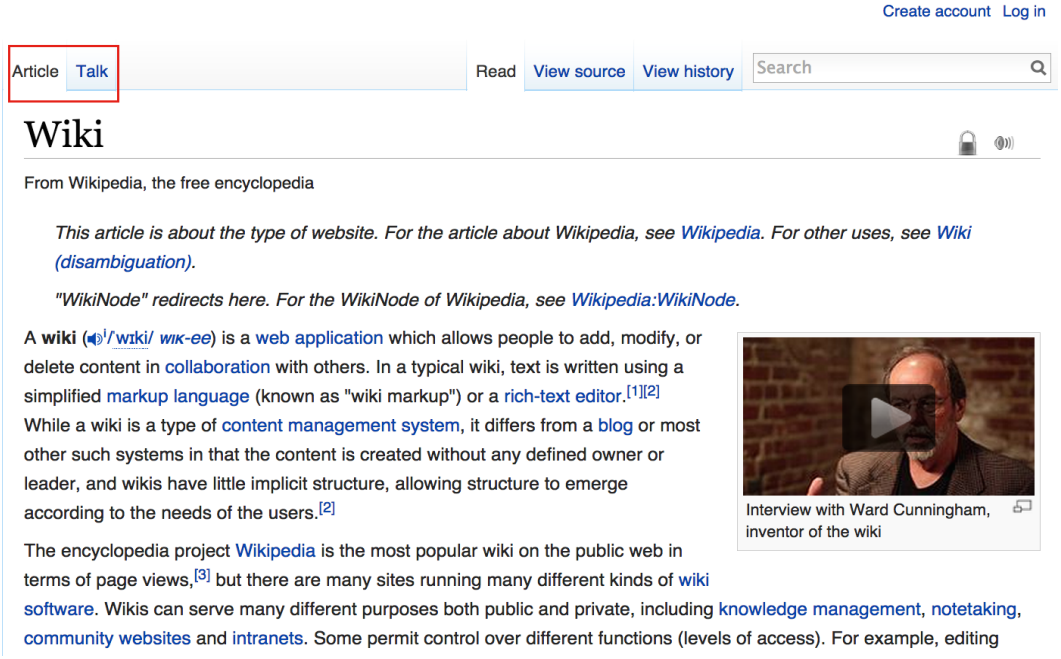


Fig. 2. Wiki article tabs; "Article" page tab.

words, wiki writing (or writing similar to it) may soon become commonplace, and writing researchers and teachers need a way to explain how readers and writers interact with each other and create meaning.

The site of my study, Wowpedia.org, is a geographically-dispersed writing community that works on researched encyclopedic wiki articles regarding the fictional Warcraft universe that appears in video games, novels, comics, and table-top RPGs.[1] There are of course varying degrees of collaboration on particular wikis; here, when I speak of wikis generally, I speak of those familiar to most, those which "anyone can edit" (Wikipedia; Wowpedia). As a site to study literacy activities, Wowpedia's strength—beyond its importance as an artifact of "participatory culture" (Jenkins et al.)—is that it offers a relatively narrow focus on all things Warcraft, whereas Wikipedia, for

instance, presents challenges due to its size and scope; in addition, Wowpedia has a significantly smaller number of contributors than Wikipedia.[2] With its common goals, content knowledge, lexis and genres, and participatory mechanisms, Wowpedia can be classified as a discourse community (Swales), whereas it could be argued that Wikipedia may be made up of many topically-focused discourse communities. For reasons such as these, I do not claim that the patterns of collaborative writing on Wowpedia are generalizable, even though many of the community's practices were borrowed and adapted from those first appearing on Wikipedia, as many encyclopedic wikis have done since Wikipedia's inception. Nonetheless, Wowpedia is a particularly rich case of a wiki that follows what we might call the editable-by-anyone tradition.

Wowpedia's community is one in which more experienced contributors and various types of administrators play more or less strong roles in the editing process, often asking questions about edits made and offering suggestions for edits. As I will show below, these administrators often work hard to make space for newcomers to become writers, while also working to make newcomers effective collaborators; in effect, they act as literacy sponsors (Brandt, "Sponsors"). Furthermore, in closely attending to the impact of modern writing technologies, we can observe how Wowpedia's contributors play roles in what Deborah Brandt has called the rise of mass literacy: "We have always assumed that writers would be few and readers would be many. But there's lots of evidence now that writers are becoming many" ("At the Dawn" n.p.). Therefore, as more and more people participate in online writing spaces, we might assume there will be more and more opportunities for people to become literacy sponsors. This idea of literacy sponsorship, while not the focus of this article, clearly has connections to the literacy practices on Wowpedia. For Brandt, sponsors are "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (19). In this way, sponsorship with regards to Wowpedia can at the very least be traced back to include Wikipedia and the development of the Mediawiki platform Wowpedia uses; the GNU general public license under which Wikipedia originally published and Wikipedia's more recent use of a Creative Commons license; and Ward Cunningham, the programmer who developed the first wiki for collaboration activities.

Naturally then, wikis are built on a foundation of technological "affordances" (Gibson) that facilitate collaboration, while the collaboration of users is framed by a particular community's social structures and conventions (Barton, "Is There a Wiki"; Hunter). Based on noted technological and social foundations of wiki writing in various online communities and classrooms, several scholars over the last decade have noted that wikis blur the boundaries between writer and readers (Barton; Cummings, Cummings and Barton; Hunter; Purdy; Vie and deWinter). This is exactly the kind of partnered writing to which Lunsford and Ede refer to when speaking of their own collaborations, seen in the light of what digital, networked writing allows:

> We have come to see that what we thought of as two separate strands of our scholarly work—one on collaboration, the other on audience—have in fact become one. As writers and audience merge and shift places in online environments . . . it is more obvious than ever that writers seldom, if ever, write alone. ("Among the Audience" 46)

Lunsford and Ede clearly acknowledge that people can play both roles (and in my reading they imply holding both roles at the same time). What is lacking, however, in our discipline's audience scholarship—even that on digital writing cultures—is a consideration of author and audience and writer and reader beyond either/or positions, i.e., writing-about or responding-to frameworks.

Those who have written on the subject of wikis find these frameworks still operating as the warrants for composition and rhetoric's disciplinary assumptions regarding authorship, audience, and collaborative writing—which continue to form the basis for writing instruction (Barton,"The Future"; Cummings and Barton; Cummings; Hunter; Garza and Hern; Lundin; Purdy; Vie and deWinter). As a whole, these scholars explain that many of the practices on wikis such as Wikipedia align with what we value in the teaching of writing, such as an emphasis on peer review and collaborative processes of knowledge construction and text production. Further, wiki writing destabilizes student-as-writer/teacher-as-audience roles (Barton, "The Future"; Cummings; Vie and deWinter). Therefore, it is argued that wikis allow students to develop richer views of writing as a social act in ways conventional composition instruction does not because wikis can challenge writers accustomed to writing in contexts with more tightly controlled text production.

"What is lacking, however, in our discipline's audience scholarship—even that on digital writing cultures—is a consideration of author and audience and writer and reader beyond either/or positions, i.e., writing-about or responding-to frameworks."

For example, James Purdy and I both show how wiki communities such as Wikipedia and WoWWiki encourage readers to contribute to and improve ongoing and pre-existing articles— a situation in which engaged readers also become co-writers ("When the Tenets"; "Erasing 'Property Lines'"). However, our models of audience and research on the nature of those collaborations have yet to reflect the nature of the new reader/writer relationships on these sites. Such theorizing requires analysis of actual discussions between wiki contributors and how they impact readers becoming writers. It is in contributors' talk about writing where we can appreciate most thoroughly how audience works in a space in which individuals can on their own take up the reins of co-author in a context in which anyone can edit. At stake is developing a more sophisticated understanding and theory of audience to keep apace with the development of digital literate identities.

In this article, I develop *a hypersocial-interactive model of writing* to account for the literate identity I see emerging from the confluence of technological and social empowerment of individuals, i.e., *readers-as-writers*. A reader-as-writer can make meaning not just in the process of reading but also by interacting with readers and writers to physically change a preexisting text written by others, thus exemplifying how "writers and audience merge and shift places" (Lunsford and Ede 45). For audience scholarship, wikis are clearly not the only digital space where we can observe increased writer/reader interaction (e.g., comments and discussion on blogs or peer review feedback on fan fiction websites), but I contend that these cases of readers-as-writers at work on Wowpedia reflect a hybrid identity on the farthest end of the spectrum from that of the Romantic idea of individual

authorship. Therefore, in my view, wikis offer a most profitable opportunity to revise our theories of audience, which have yet to catch up with this particular writing activity. In brief, a wiki-based writing project and community of writers can afford an audience with more active, collaborative potential in the process of meaning-making.

HYPERSOCIAL-INTERACTIVE (WIKI) WRITING

Through my focus on audience, I propose a conceptual model of writing that builds upon the models of Ede and Lunsford, Nystrand, and Johnson (see Figures 1, 3, and 4). However, in constructing my hypersocial-interactive model of writing, I want to rely more heavily on Nystrand's social-interactive model of writing because it seems the most promising from which to develop the concept of readers-as-writers.

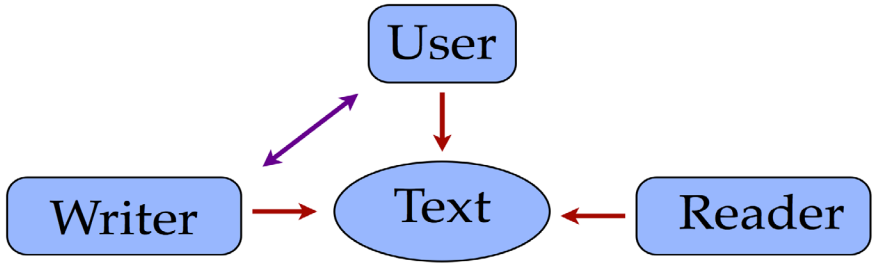


Fig. 3. Johnson's Audience Involved: Usability.

Nystrand's model places the text (i.e., the site of meaning-making) in between writer and reader positions. For Nystrand, the text becomes a site for interaction between readers and writers from which meaning arises, even though he and Himley explain,

> [w]riting is obviously not interactive in the behavioral sense that writers and readers take turns as do speakers and listeners. [. . .] All language—whether written or spoken—is interactive in the abstract sense that its use involves an exchange of meaning, and the text is the means of exchange. (198)

Nystrand's model, then, is ideal for exploring wiki writing where the potentiality of interaction in behavioral and abstract senses exist.

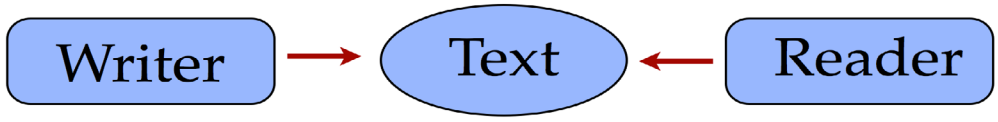


Fig. 4. Social-Inteeractive model of writing.

In Nystrand's work (and that of Nystrand and Himley), writers and readers go through processes of assuming knowledge and expectations and predicting purposes: "Meaning is said to be a social construct negotiated by writer and reader through the medium of text, which uniquely configures their respective purposes" (66). In this model, when writers fail to anticipate all of the readers' needs, discourse might fail to have the intended effect or be misinterpreted. The smaller the sphere of convergence between writer and reader understanding, the better.

In this social perspective, the success of writer/reader interaction remains largely the responsibility of the writer. That is, because writers and readers are not present in the same space and/or time, writers must work to get "in tune with their readers" and "recognize where to elaborate, where to abbreviate, where to paragraph, and so on. . . . [T]he character and conduct of discourse are governed by the conversants' expectations for understanding one another" (Nystrand and Himley 199-200). Writing as communication, then, depends on "reciprocity" (Nystrand and Himley 202). Readers can make assumptions about a writer's purpose, and writers can make assumptions about readers' knowledge and expectations: "Texts have meaning not to the extent that they represent the writer's purpose but rather to the extent that their potential for meaning is realized by the reader" (Nystrand 76). Therefore, according to Nystrand and Himley and their contemporaries, social context matters to a great degree, and an effective sense of audience develops from a writer's membership in any number of discourse communities (Gee; Johns; Swales); successful communication emerges from writers' and readers' matching or overlapping memberships that allow for "mutual frame[s] of reference" (Nystrand 79). These transactional frames are the foundation upon which reciprocity is built, and the principle of reciprocity undergirds how we currently conceive of and teach audience. However, in Ede and Lunsford's and Nystrand and Himley's social perspectives, writing remains to a large degree what Kenneth Bruffee calls "a displaced form of conversation" ("Collaborative Learning" 641). Writing is largely in the hands of individual writers because writers and readers most often make meaning of texts in separate places and times. Readers are left with limited power to *write about* or *respond to* the texts they encounter.

A smaller sphere of convergence in meaning-making is just what Johnson tries to establish with his audience-involved model. User testing acts as a mechanism for the negotiation of meaning between writers and users. By physically being made a part of the writing process, users "challenge the role (and power) of writers as it encourages a reciprocal and participatory model of writing unlike that usually explained in general composition and rhetoric studies" (362). My understanding of where Johnson finds fault in models such as Ede and Lunsford's is that meaning-making is still seen from the writer's point of view (363). Readers are largely virtual as opposed to actual, as in his model, and lack power to affect text production or build reciprocity. He asserts that we need to understand the production of discourse from the perspective of "an actual living, breathing figure" (363). That is, audience has been for the most part kept at a distance from the writer; "they are only written or spoken to, not *with*" (Johnson 363, emphasis added).

For the most part, I believe Johnson gets this right with his model of writing. The strength of Johnson's audience-involved model is that it includes the active participation of users in textual production (I also think it fair to extend his model to peer review readers in collaborative writing

groups, for instance). And because audience is present and active in his model, we can easily see a connection between the audience-involved model and wiki writing. Meaning is negotiated between writers and actual readers, but wiki-writing simply affords deeper interactiveness and the capacity to take on the identity of reader-as-writer.

Nevertheless, Johnson's model is ultimately limited by the fact that even with user-testing, there is a virtual audience of users/consumers/readers who will eventually engage with a text *after* user-testing is completed, and these readers (at the time of Johnson's article, at least) do not ordinarily have easy access to the writers who might then revise a text. Users might respond to or write about a text by sending letters or emails or even posting feedback on a product's or company's website or Facebook page, but this would not promise (timely or immediate) change in the text of a confusing user manual, for instance. The audience-involved model, therefore, hits the same snag as those models Johnson critiques. As George Dillon puts it, "the meaning of the text is not on the page to be extracted by readers; rather, it is what results when they engage . . . texts for whatever purposes they may have and with whatever knowledge, values, and preoccupations they bring to it" (qtd. in Kroll 178). At the end of the day, in the audience-involved model writer and reader go their separate ways, and the writer remains at the helm of text production and steps away from writer/reader involvement once the text is circulated, that is, published.

As my work shows, readers play a larger role in making meaning on Wowpedia, and the *hyper*social-interactive model of writing (Figure 5) is attuned to this new condition of literacy. Therefore, it maps well onto Nystrand's process for the text-mediated exchanges of meaning between writers and readers. Nystrand's communicative process is, on Wowpedia, augmented through the practice of more or less rapid mass collaborative talk (between actual readers and writers) and a reader's ability to edit previously existing text written by others. As mentioned above, many have discussed this ability of readers to edit, but little has been said about the actual process of knowledge construction as it plays out behind the scenes on talk pages.

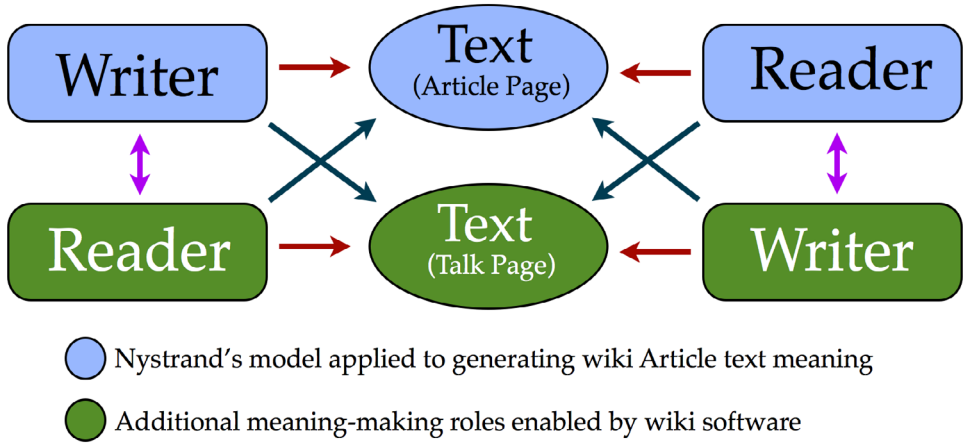
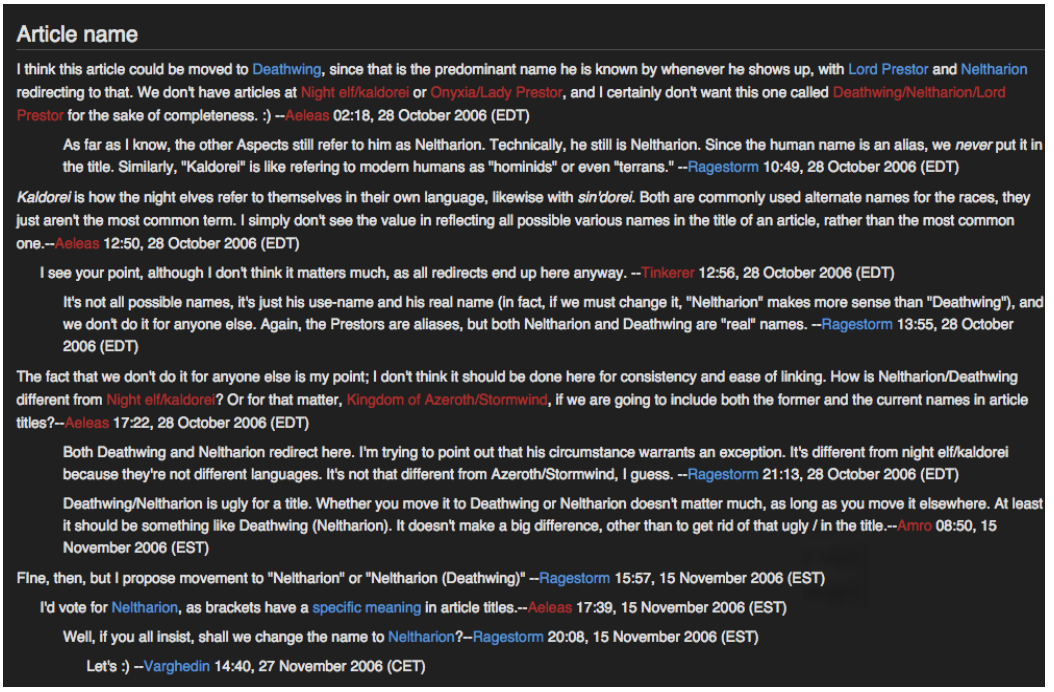


Fig. 5. HyperSocial-Interactive model of writing (as observed on wikis).

On wikis such as Wowpedia (e.g., Wikipedia), these pages gives us access to contributors' collaborative talk: commenting on writing, taking up the reins of writing, and interacting with

other readers and writers. Nested behind each article there exists a page dedicated to talk about improving articles. The talk page (see Figure 6) is a space where readers and writers discuss what is, could be, or should be in articles. This talk—this writing about writing—is not so different from previous audience activities. Indeed, Wowpedia talk pages are not so different from the marginalia in the medieval codex, described by Jay Bolter: "The center of the page contained the more ancient and venerable text, while the margins offered explanation and commentary added by one or more scholars" (683). As with these marginal notes (written by numerous people over centuries), talk pages are sites of "interpretive material" (Bolter), such as offering a reading of or judgment on the article.

An important difference, however, is that talk pages also allow for multiple readers to work collectively through problems of interpretation in an article's text at the same time and in the same space—also interacting with those who have taken on the role of writer—in order to ask questions about the content of the article or of sources used.[3] Further, as in writing groups, writers can interact with readers by asking for feedback before or after making changes to the article and by reporting having made changes to an article. Talk pages, then, are where readers and writers interact and generate (and negotiate) meaning.



Article name

I think this article could be moved to Deathwing, since that is the predominant name he is known by whenever he shows up, with Lord Prestor and Neltharion redirecting to that. We don't have articles at Night elf/kaldorei or Onyxia/Lady Prestor, and I certainly don't want this one called Deathwing/Neltharion/Lord Prestor for the sake of completeness. :) --Aeleas 02:18, 28 October 2006 (EDT)

> As far as I know, the other Aspects still refer to him as Neltharion. Technically, he still is Neltharion. Since the human name is an alias, we *never* put it in the title. Similarly, "Kaldorei" is like refering to modern humans as "hominids" or even "terrans." --Ragestorm 10:49, 28 October 2006 (EDT)

Kaldorei is how the night elves refer to themselves in their own language, likewise with *sin'dorei*. Both are commonly used alternate names for the races, they just aren't the most common term. I simply don't see the value in reflecting all possible various names in the title of an article, rather than the most common one.--Aeleas 12:50, 28 October 2006 (EDT)

> I see your point, although I don't think it matters much, as all redirects end up here anyway. --Tinkerer 12:56, 28 October 2006 (EDT)

> > It's not all possible names, it's just his use-name and his real name (in fact, if we must change it, "Neltharion" makes more sense than "Deathwing"), and we don't do it for anyone else. Again, the Prestors are aliases, but both Neltharion and Deathwing are "real" names. --Ragestorm 13:55, 28 October 2006 (EDT)

The fact that we don't do it for anyone else is my point; I don't think it should be done here for consistency and ease of linking. How is Neltharion/Deathwing different from Night elf/kaldorei? Or for that matter, Kingdom of Azeroth/Stormwind, if we are going to include both the former and the current names in article titles?--Aeleas 17:22, 28 October 2006 (EDT)

> Both Deathwing and Neltharion redirect here. I'm trying to point out that his circumstance warrants an exception. It's different from night elf/kaldorei because they're not different languages. It's not that different from Azeroth/Stormwind, I guess. --Ragestorm 21:13, 28 October 2006 (EDT)

> Deathwing/Neltharion is ugly for a title. Whether you move it to Deathwing or Neltharion doesn't matter much, as long as you move it elsewhere. At least it should be something like Deathwing (Neltharion). It doesn't make a big difference, other than to get rid of that ugly / in the title.--Amro 08:50, 15 November 2006 (EST)

FIne, then, but I propose movement to "Neltharion" or "Neltharion (Deathwing)" --Ragestorm 15:57, 15 November 2006 (EST)

I'd vote for Neltharion, as brackets have a specific meaning in article titles.--Aeleas 17:39, 15 November 2006 (EST)

> Well, if you all insist, shall we change the name to Neltharion?--Ragestorm 20:08, 15 November 2006 (EST)

> > Let's :) --Varghedin 14:40, 27 November 2006 (CET)

Fig. 6. Excerpt from talk page discussion.

The distinction I am attempting to draw between Nystrand's model and my own is that while wiki *articles* continue to serve as bridges for meaning-making between writer and reader as described by Nystrand, talk pages allow for actual readers and writers to work out meaning together—synchronously or asynchronously on the talk page. This model of writing also includes the power of readers to become writers. In this way, the editability of articles and *talk pages* add

another layer of interactivity for which Nystrand's model cannot account. It is these social features of collective meaning-making and collaborative editability that the concept of reader-as-writer seeks to represent. This concept, therefore, alludes to prior theories of writing as fundamentally social, even in situations in which writers never interact with actual readers and readers are assumed to make meaning of the texts they encounter; I include hypertext theory in this body of thought. This, then, is where writing on Wowpedia distinguishes itself: not only can readers and writers interact during the meaning-making process but also readers can become writers and cowriters.

READERS-AS-WRITERS IN THE HYPERSOCIAL-INTERACTIVE MODEL

In this section, I offer case studies from Wowpedia talk pages that illustrate how "writers and audience merge and shift places" (Lunsford and Ede 45) on this wiki. On Wowpedia we can find readers navigating their way through rhetorical situations vastly different from those based on print media. Readers are valued by members of Wowpedia not just for their commentary on writing but also for their potential to become co-writers. As I will show, in collaborative writing on Wowpedia, readers can take on the social roles and activities we associate with peer reviewers and writing partners—sometimes on their own and at other times through encouragement and socialization by veteran contributors. In short, the hypersocial-interactive model of writing is my effort to explain a type of reader, a reader-as-writer, who can make meaning not just in the process of reading but also by interacting with readers and writers and physically changing a preexisting text written by others, thus embodying Lunsford and Ede's observation about twenty-first century writers and readers.

Readers on Wowpedia can comment on writing and so take on the role of reviewer much as they do in other contexts, such as blogs and fan fiction sites as well as voluntary and school-sponsored writing groups (Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning"; Gere and Abbott; Nystrand and Brandt; Spigelman, "Habits," *Across*). A reader responds to someone else's writing with praise, negative criticism, questions, and suggestions, and, in doing so, these readers' talk page contributions are collaborative acts meant to improve articles. Take for example a conversation on the "Medivh" talk page between Lijaka (who had never edited an article on Wowpedia) and Baggins and Sky (who have each contributed over 25,000 edits of various kinds, hold administrative roles, and took part in editing this particular article). Lijaka starts the discussion thread by asking about conflicting information present in the "Medivh" and "Aegywnn" articles:

"In short, the hypersocial-interactive model of writing is my effort to explain a type of reader, a reader-as-writer, who can make meaning not just in the process of reading but also by interacting with readers and writers and physically changing a preexisting text written by others."

> Hi, I'm not sure which one is correct, but thought I'd point out that on this page it

> states Medivh's coma lasted 20 years, but on the Aegwynn page, it states he awoke 6 years later. *—Lijaka 18:11, 18 June 2007 (UTC)*[4]
>
> > [The] Six year reference was in Warcraft 1 manual [a video game]—pages 21, 22, and possible other sources. The 20 year reference was from Cycle of Hatred [sic; this is the title of a novel]? I'd just explain the differences between the two stories somewhere, and add the citations. *—Baggins 22:18, 18 June 2007 (UTC)*
> >
> > > Considering how poorly blizzard [Warcraft video game developer and publisher] is at keeping their timelines consistent, its [sic] possible that a mistake may have cropped up in Cycle of Hatred [sic] as well. We may never know which case it was. *—Baggins 22:22, 18 June 2007 (UTC)*
> > >
> > > > 20 year reference is in The Last Guardian [sic; title of a novel]; don't ask me to find the page. :(*—Sky 03:03, 23 June 2007 (UTC)*
>
> This is why I tend to avoid using specific dates on article pages, :p . . . Better to mask them with terms like, decades, several years, etc. *—Baggins 15:02, 27 July 2007 (UTC)*

Similar to the "users" Robert Johnson describes as giving feedback to technical writers in his audience-involved model, Lijaka here pinpoints an inconsistency between these two articles that might create a problem for other readers. In contrast to the process Johnson describes—a process in which a text's final draft is published and in most cases cannot be easily updated and republished—a wiki article can be updated easily and quickly as often as needed. That is, if we imagine the "Medivh" article were published in a print or proprietary form, Lijaka would have had to send in an email to the publisher, and then, if the suggestion were accepted, Lijaka would then have to wait for the next edition of the print encyclopedia to see the problem addressed. With wikis, however, the ability to leave feedback easily on an article's talk page is amplified by the access Lijaka has to all of the articles' writers—as long as they are paying attention to the talk pages and are willing to respond. In this way, both the wiki as a collaborative technology and the value community members place on feedback contribute to the participatory powers of readers to shape revision.

Moreover, Lijaka easily could have edited both pages and made the articles consistent. However, this technical affordance allowing anyone to edit does not always mean a reader will become a writer. In this case, Lijaka did not. It is not clear why. Perhaps Lijaka held a conventional notion of audience. He or she, as a reader, never thought to make edits to the page. In the end, Lijaka never responds to Baggins' and Sky's posts, so it is equally possible that Lijaka simply did not revisit the talk page after posting his/her comment and never saw Baggins' and Sky's responses. Regardless of the cause, Lijaka's lack of participation in writing was not because he or she was constrained by the technology or community—all readers are encouraged to edit. Lijaka remains in a reader-as-reviewer position

even though Baggins seemingly invites Lijaka to become a writer (see Figure 7 and note that the missing arrow between "reader-writer" and "text (article)" represents the absence of a reader acting as a writer).

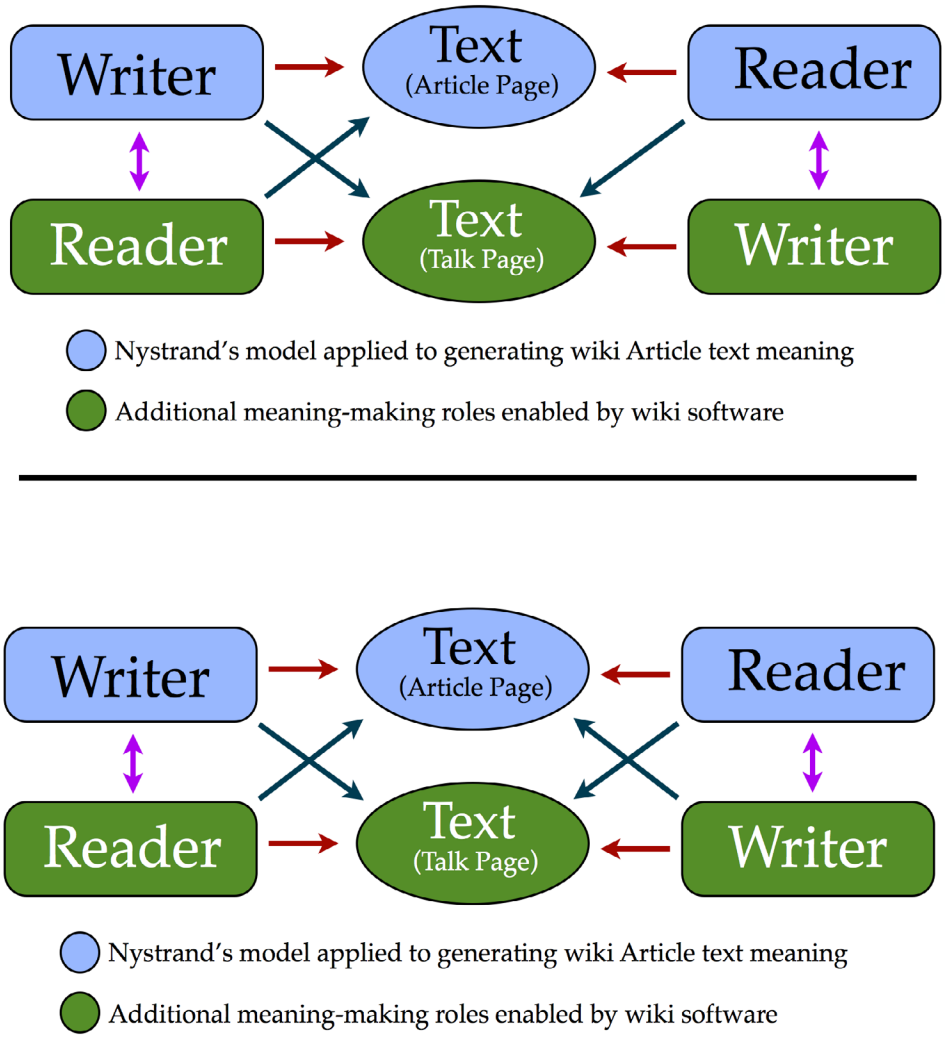


Fig. 7. The Reader-as-Reviewer role, in contrast to that of the Reader-as-Writer.

That is, in Baggins' first post, he uses the modal "would," and in this context of collaborative writing, we can interpret "I'd just explain the differences between the two stories somewhere, and add the citations" to include the conditional phrase "If I were revising this" or "If I were you." So Baggins' response can be read as an invitation to edit, and such invitations permeate Wowpedia's talk pages, some more obvious than others, as with a high-level administrator's response to contributor js1006:

> A pretty small point, but the term "anti-hero" is being misused here [in the "Deathwing" article] http:/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-hero. Deathwing is a villain and evil, but as the wiki link shows, that is not the meaning of the term anti-hero. *—js1006 15:31, 8 September 2007 (UTC)*
>
> Agreed. Remove as needed. *—Ragestorm 20:28, 10 September 2007 (UTC)*

In this case, as with Lijaka, js1006 does not make the changes she or he recommended. I found many more examples of readers acting solely as reviewers of articles. Despite the fact that (1) we can see more experienced contributors encouraging readers to become writers and contribute writing to articles and (2) the wiki enables users to edit, a reader-as-reviewer doesn't necessarily take on the role of writer.

A few patterns emerge from examining occasions in which readers-as-reviewers pose questions about or identify potential problems with the content of articles:

- a reader-reviewer is often invited to make revisions;
- a discussion motivates others (but not the original reader-as-reviewer) to revise;
- and discussants come to an agreement that edits need to be made which might or might not result in changes being (1) made, (2) made at a later date, or (3) reported on the talk page.

Readers' access to writers and other readers seems to create an atmosphere in which response to one another is taken seriously. Suggestions are weighed, sometimes by dozens of contributors over the life of an article, and this type of reader/writer interaction is one example of the type of social role associated with readers-as-writers.

More important to hypersocial-interactive writing, of course, is the ability to become a writer and to revise the writing of others. What I call "at-will coauthorship" distinguishes this wiki collaborative writing from other types. This is strongly encouraged by Wowpedia's "Be Bold!" policy:

> If someone writes an inferior article, a merely humorous article, an article stub, or outright patent nonsense, don't worry about his/her feelings. Correct it, add to it, and, if it's a total waste of time, replace it with brilliant prose. That's the nature of a Wiki.
>
> And, of course, others here will boldly and mercilessly edit what you write. Don't take it personally. They, like all of us, just want to make Wowpedia as good as it can possibly be. ("Be Bold")

Indeed, Wikipedia's co-founder, Larry Sanger, attributes the success of Wikipedia to what he calls "good-natured anarchy" and to the fact that wiki software encourages "extreme openness and decentralization" of labor (310). If a wiki is to grow quickly and cover a wide range of topics, it needs contributors who are free to add or edit content when they see a need. These interventions

may include adding a reference, reorganizing sections, reverting incorrect edits or those not in line with community standards, or making the language in articles more neutral (i.e., "Neutral Point of View").[5] But while the community "exhorts users to be bold in editing pages" ("Be Bold"), it is with the understanding that new members may not be familiar with established practices, and so guidance is offered on how to interact with newcomers. What follows is only the introduction of a longer article titled "Don't Bite the Newbies" that outlines what we might refer to as the rules of engagement:

> Wowpedia improves through not only the hard work of more dedicated members, but also through the contributions of many curious newcomers. All of us were newcomers once, even those careful or lucky enough to have avoided common mistakes, and many of us consider ourselves newcomers even after months (or years) of contributing.
>
> New contributors are prospective "members" and are therefore our most valuable resource. We must treat newcomers with kindness and patience—nothing scares potentially valuable contributors away faster than hostility or elitism. While many newcomers hit the ground running, some lack knowledge about the way we do things. ("Don't Bite")

In part, becoming a reader-as-writer requires learning how to use the wiki to read, comment, write, and collaborate. Take, for example, Ellethwen, who was new to the wiki at the time she/he reported a problem in the "Lich King" article: "[The images are] all clustered together and on one side. It looks bad, and it's pushing down text in Internet Explorer" ("Talk: Lich King"). Again, this is similar to the type of feedback Johnson describes in usability testing, but there's one pivotal difference. Because newcomers are valued for the contributions they may make to the wiki, Ragestorm, a much more experienced writer, invites the reader to become a writer: "Fiddle around with them, see what you can come up with. Apart from the infobox picture, none of them are wedded to their location." When Ellethwen conveys her/his hesitancy ("I'm no good with wiki formatting. I'd probably ruin the article. But if you want me to, I can try"), Ragestorm educates Ellethwen about the wiki technology: "The article can be reverted at any time, so experiment a little—and use the 'show preview' button to view your changes before they're actually saved." Time and time again, more experienced Wowpedians encourage newcomers to contribute to the writing project by taking on the role of writer by teaching newcomers to use wiki technology. But this ad hoc apprenticeship also includes the socialization of newcomers.

This is why Henry Jenkins et al. argue that new media literacies should be taught as "cultural competencies," or "ways of interacting within a larger community, and not simply an individualized skill to be used for personal expression" (20). Importantly, these online (writing) spaces, as Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear describe them, involve both "technical stuff" and "ethos stuff" (9). Consequently, becoming a member of the Wowpedia community includes becoming a good writing partner, and this appears to come with experience. In other words, when growing numbers of readers become bold writers on Wowpedia, problems can occur if writers have different visions of what the content of an article should be as well as how the collaborative writing processes work.

Successful collaboration occurs on Wowpedia when contributors are closely aligned in the ways they go about getting writing done with others (see Hunter). This alignment becomes more visible when we examine breakdowns in communication resulting from contributors not conforming to the same practices—in terms of generic conventions, for instance, as well as within the process of collaboration.

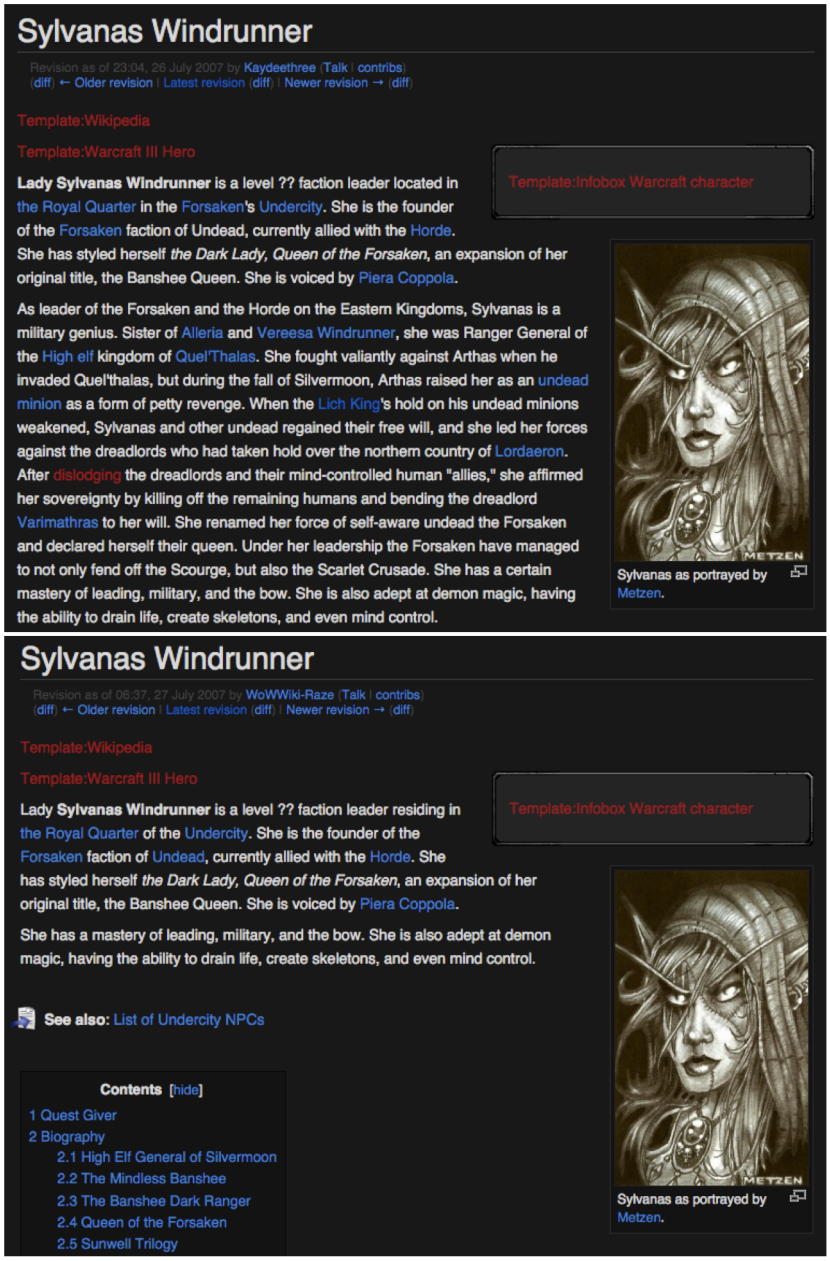


Fig. 8. Sylvanas Windrunner before and after edits.

Take the case of a minor edit war that erupted around the introduction of the "Sylvanas Windrunner" article. It started when Raze deleted a paragraph of information from the introduction (see before and after edits in Figure 8). During the next 20 minutes, Sky reverts Raze's deletion edit; Raze repeats the deletion. This is finally followed by Sky making a talk page post and a final reversion of Raze's edit:

> Yes, it is redundant [the introductory paragraph Raze deleted]. That is the point of the introduction. It is meant to give an overview of an article, or an essay, or what have you. Mind you, not even all of it is "covered below". It will be readded. —*Sky 07:11, 27 July 2007 (UTC)*
>
> > I personally find the article way too verbose, loaded with unnecessary details and adjectives & adverbs (her valiant efforts?? She fought valiantly against Arthas?). Here's an example of the proper format [Raze links to an example article on Wikipedia]. It is much shorter and concise. Personally I think we need to follow this standard. —*Raze 07:22, 27 July 2007 (UTC)*
> >
> > > Then make it closer to NPOV, if that's the issue. Deleting the introductory paragraph is silly. —S*ky 07:26, 27 July 2007 (UTC)*

This excerpt is from a longer conversation in which Baggins, acting as a moderating voice, also explains to Raze the function of introductions in wiki articles as well as the importance of being "careful of removing unique and cited information if it doesn't exist elsewhere in the article." While Sky, a more experienced community member, does tell Raze the deletion was "silly" in the heat of the moment, another member more gently instructs Raze regarding the wiki-encyclopedic genre and its conventions on Wowpedia. Of key importance in this exchange is that Sky never attempts to dissuade Raze from editing. Even after admonishing Raze, Sky in fact, tells Raze to "Make it [the introduction] closer to NPOV."

Although both Sky and Baggins intend to teach Raze about writing in this genre, Raze has also obtained more important experience in how the talk page plays a crucial role in giving writers a space to work out differences and find solutions. This situation and its resulting discussion come about because a reader was able to become a reader-as-writer.

In part, then, problems arise between contributors when they do not follow established community practices, for example, when making changes to articles and reverting edits without using the talk page to discuss those edits with others. In the next excerpt, Ragestorm points this out to newcomer Peregrine:

> What the hell? Ragestorm, I'm getting kind of sick of you deleting everything I do on here; there was nothing wrong with my Illidan Stormrage pic there. Why on earth did you go and get rid of it? ~— *Peregrine*

[. . .]

> I was deleting that picture before you came along, and Kirochi did as well. The problem's not you, it's the kriffin' [fucking] article. —*Ragestorm 21:18, 2 July 2007 (UTC)*

[. . .]

> > I'm not going to pretend this was handled properly, but I have a tendency to revert immediately, and you have a tendency to not react [respond] to discussions, so here we are. How does that image . . . show Illidan's "glory?" —*Ragestorm 00:24, 3 July 2007 (UTC)* [emphasis added]
>
> It's such a dramatic screenshot, and I don't think the blue backdrop ruins it. . . . Hm, would creating a page where players could post their WoW Model Viewer screenshots be some sort of violation? There seems to be a rule to revert every edit I do. —*Peregrine*

Although posting about edits or potential edits is not a formalized rule on the wiki, these types of announcements about revision ideas and intentions open up discussion and assuage the rancor of others. Equally important, asking about potential revisions ultimately serves a significant function for newcomers in that discussions create opportunities to learn more about not just *Warcraft* as a fictional universe but also writing about *Warcraft* on Wowpedia. As Peregrine remarks, "There seems to be a rule to revert every edit I do," implying that this is not the first time Peregrine has experienced edit reversion. But these previous events have not deterred Peregrine from continuing on as a reader-as-writer. Although Peregrine could have easily read all the key guideline and policy articles that direct editing, learning about rules after making edits rather than before is one method of enculturation in an environment where anyone can edit.

Indeed, posting about edits or potential edits was a pattern I found across talk pages and is especially evident with newcomers. Many newcomers took a more cautious approach that conveys an awareness that one is ultimately working with others. These writers posted questions or proposals concerning potential edits and waited for some kind of endorsement before taking action—either from an administrator or the general consensus of those participating in the discussion. Here is an example:

> Is there even a point in having this section [of general information on Illidan]? Other characters don't have it, or at least the ones I've seen. Anything in here can be directly included in the article itself. Also there should be synchronicity between articles, if one has it then all should have it or none should have it. To me

> it ruins the professional look of the article and makes it seem untidy. *I'm not going to delete this because its [sic] a major portion but I would like someone to justify it being here. If not then I'll delete it. —Noman953, 04:15 23 January 2007 (UTC)* [emphasis added]

Noman953's statement concerning reluctance to delete the section in question would seem to contradict the very idea of being bold that is so emphasized in the "Be Bold!" guidelines. However, what he/she announces as the plan of action in fact falls under the "but don't be reckless!" subsection of "Be Bold!" Noman953 has clearly learned this step of consulting before editing at some time in the past. I won't go so far as to claim that Noman953 learned this on Wowpedia; what is of more importance is that this announcement falls in line with the accepted behaviors established for collaborative writing on Wowpedia and with a reader-as-writer perspective on audience. Noman953 does make the proposed edits after receiving feedback from more experienced contributors. His discussion with Kirkburn and Ragestorm typifies reader-as-writers' mass collaborative processes:

> Rather than just being removed entirely, it should be rewritten into a short intro prose covering the important points about Illidan. Certainly at the moment it covers far far too much, is inconsistent and invites the addition of pointless factoids. *—Kirkburn 04:37, 23 January 2007 (EST)*
>
> > Agreed. For the record, "Furion" [a Warcraft character] has one of those as well, but we should compress the info into paragraph format, in the same manner as other pages, such as "Tyrande" [a Warcraft character]. — *Ragestorm 17:15, 23 January 2007 (EST)*
> >
> > Edits are done. *—Noman953, 06:56 23 January 2007 (UTC)*

Noman953, as a member of Wowpedia for only a few months at the time of this discussion, is acting in the hybrid role of reader-as-writer. First, Noman953 offers feedback on the writing of others and feels it necessary to check with the community of writers before making what he/she considered would be a major edit. Rightly so, it seems, because Kirkburn next advises a particular revision of the section in question, and Ragestorm offers more specific suggestions. Finally, Noman953 reports having made the edits. As we have seen in the Sky and Raze example, the process of Noman953's contribution cannot be taken for granted. Reporting edits or intentions to edit appears to play an important role in reducing the chances of misunderstandings and tensions between contributors that arise when anyone can edit at anytime. It is one of the social practices of Wowpedia that keeps collaboration running smoothly. Collaborative writing works because Noman953, Kirkburn, and Ragestorm are able to work well together as mutually recognized readers-as-writers.

Overall, what I have observed on Wowpedia aligns with James Porter's use of a Burkean-inspired example to describe a social view of composition. Instead of a parlor, he uses as his example a hypothetical attempt to persuade university administration about the need for a writing center.

He explains,

> As a rhetor I might be changed by, rather than change, my audience. . . . I bring pre-texts from another realm, a set of assumptions, beliefs, and the like, that are only partially, if at all, functional in this discourse community. . . . I may be successful in reshaping or redirecting the community to see the value of a writing center, but I might be changed by that identification. To change my audience, I have to be willing to change, too. I must accept them as writers and see myself as, in part, audience: thus, the roles of audience and writer, these once separate roles of audience and writer, become blurred, coalesce in the notion of the discourse community. (116)

This process of change in one's (literate) identity within a discourse community also appears to work similarly in the collaborative context of Wowpedia. Over time, newcomers more or less come to act in accordance with shared behaviors and practices regarding collaborative writing—often as a result of ad hoc mentoring by more experienced members. Beyond learning to use the wiki software, newcomers learn to more deftly shift between the roles of reader and writer, in effect "reacculturating" (Bruffee, *Collaborative Learning* 8) to the circumstances of Wowpedia and becoming members of this knowledge community.

CONCLUSION

Building on Nystrand's social-interactive model of writing, in which meaning is negotiated by writer and reader through the medium of text, I have devised a hypersocial-interactive model of writing to account for writer and reader roles in meaning-making on Wowpedia. As a result, within this model I develop the concept of readers-as-writers to describe best what I see as new audience roles that are in the words of Knobel and Lankshear "more 'participatory,' 'collaborative,' and 'distributed' in nature than [those in] conventional literacies. [They are] more collaborative than what was possible prior to the development of new media" (9). My hope is that this model of writing might offer value in thinking about audience with current or yet-to-be-developed writing platforms.

For example, we are beginning to see a kind of reading that becomes more interactive in book publishing. While Clive Thompson complains that currently books are "the only major medium that hasn't embraced the digital age" (50), he suggests that if publishers want to succeed in the twenty-first century, they need to "stop thinking about the future of publishing and think instead about the *future of reading*" (50, emphasis added). This future is not one that should be focused solely on the digital delivery of ebooks to Kindles or iPads. That's simply another distribution channel of media consumption. Instead, publishing's future is one that depends on how it makes reading more interactive through the use of technology to allow readers to interact with other readers as well as writers.

Thompson points to existent technologies that increase reader/reader and even writer/reader interaction beyond my case of the wiki. In book publishing, he cites Mackenzie Wark's use of the CommentPress Wordpress theme developed by the Institute for the Future of the Book. Similarly, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, the current Director of Scholarly Communication of the Modern Language

Association, made available a draft of her book manuscript, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy,* on the Institute for the Future of the Book website. This platform allowed readers to leave comments on paragraphs, pages, or the whole draft as well as interact with other readers and Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick's goal in opening up the review process was "to reform peer review for the digital age, insisting that peer review will be a more productive, more helpful, more transparent, and more effective process if conducted in the open." In this way, Fitzpatrick grants greater partial textual ownership to her readers, at least temporarily.

With regard to higher education, several digital technologies are also being developed by universities as part of digital humanities initiatives that will emphasize the importance of collaborative tools for developing students' new media literacies. To name just one, MIT's HyperStudio recently received a NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant to develop Annotation Studio, a tool designed in part for collaboratively reading multimedia, which "will help students develop traditional humanistic skills including close reading, textual analysis, persuasive writing, and critical thinking." In my mind, developing collaborative mindsets for a digital age is just what web-based, mass-collaborative encyclopedia projects such as Wowpedia already do; higher education is playing catch-up.

Case in point: in her 2004 "Chair's Address," Kathleen Blake Yancey argues for a "new curriculum for the twenty-first century" that includes moving beyond "our model of teaching composition" which "(still) embodies the narrow and the singular . . . emphasis on a primary and single human relationship: the writer [student] in relationship to the teacher" (308-09). As she asserts, "[i]n contrast to the development of a writing public, the classroom writer is not a member of a collaborative group with a common project linked to the world at large and delivered in multiple genres and media, but a singular person writing over and over again—to the teacher" (310). If the emphasis of writing instruction is that teacher/student relationship and power dynamic, how prepared for writing in other rhetorical situations can our students be?

As a move towards a more effective curriculum, Yancey advocates empowering students to take advantage of digital writing technologies in order to "create writing publics" (321). Given the writer/reader relations writing technologies such Mediawiki, CommentPress, and Google Apps afford, we can help students understand more fully what being a twenty-first century audience means in terms of Yancey's new curriculum. That is, the norm of what it means to be a reader may come to be increasingly participatory, and if that is the case, students need to be adequately prepared to take on those participatory roles.

In my own teaching of new literacies, I have used Wikipedia as a productive venue for students to experience what a contemporary, empowered audience can do. The assumption is that the audience will participate; however, the audience will need to know *how* to participate. As I have shown above, when collaboration on Wowpedia is successful, it requires more than simply finding the "edit" button, adding content, and hitting "save"; it requires attention to the social practices of the community. Matt Barton sums this idea up well: "Knowing how to change a wiki page is one thing; knowing how to make an appropriate change that will be accepted by a wiki community is another" ("Is There a Wiki" 178). Wowpedia contributors come to share a communal notion of authorship and textual ownership as well as a willingness to see their readers as potential writing partners (Hunter).

It is from this foundation that readers-as-writers emerge.

For example, one of my students, known as BadgerBuddy on Wikipedia, was an early contributor to the Wikipedia article on Henry Jenkins' concept of "transmedia storytelling" (we were reading Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* at the time). When we began these Wikipedia projects in my composition course in 2007, it seemed enough to emphasize possible co-production of articles—either by creating new pieces or revising existing ones. His individual contributions accreted over time; in this case, his initial additions to "Transmedia Storytelling" were first written over the span of one week. The talk page was empty and remained so. My student didn't report any need to work with Ill seletorre, the only other contributor, perhaps because the article was at such an early stage of development.

"[N]ew media writing may soon become commonplace, and writing researchers and teachers can use the concept of reader-as-writers and the hypersocial-interactive model to explain how readers and writers interact with each other to create meaning in a variety of rhetorical situations."

However, I later realized the need to pay attention to talk pages in my teaching. In one instance, a student who passionately opposed popular characterizations of pit bulls as dangerous wanted to work on the Wikipedia "Pit bull" article, which already had a long history of edit reversions (see "Edit Warring") and has a talk page running back to 2003. Essentially, the student saw areas of the article she felt needed to be revised to reflect reality. She cited sources in her contributions, but this didn't stop her changes from being reverted and deleted with no communication from the responsible contributors. Might she have been able to prevent these changes if she had instead participated in the talk page first? It's impossible to say, given the tenor of the many impassioned discussions. But she might have least assuaged her own frustrations by taking on the reader-as-writer identity more fully and attempting to engage others in productive conversation (and there are many productive conversations to be found on this article's talk page).

I have responded by pushing against the idea that writing the article (or revising it) is the main goal. Instead, I emphasize that, in addition to making edits, students should try to interact with other readers and writers by asking questions about and suggesting revisions. Working to build some consensus through conversation is an important part of the writing process.

In these ways, I see wiki writing running counter to more individualistic systems of text production—including the "narrow and the singular" student (writer) and teacher (reader) relationship Yancey criticizes (309-10) as still dominating in our classrooms—and wiki-based writing assignments, especially those taking place on public wikis, can bring students into closer proximity with audience. Those collaborative acts of writing can include just the sort of interactions I have examined in this article (see Robert Cummings for a well-designed Wikipedia assignment). Such assignments can capitalize on a wiki's collaborative affordances, making more visible what roles students might play in text production and also how they might contribute appropriately to building knowledge. That is, when students write for public wikis, they have the opportunity to examine and often experience the local social practices firsthand.

However, I do not want what I have written to be seen as advocating for wikis as a panacea for teaching the concept of audience. More generally, in writing instruction, collaborative reading and writing supports the development of literacy skills we already value, and the affordances of new media can make visible the importance of more collaborative mindsets. In other words, new media writing may soon become commonplace, and writing researchers and teachers can use the concept of readers-as-writers and the hypersocial-interactive model to explain how readers and writers interact with each other to create meaning in a variety of rhetorical situations. What I suggest is giving students opportunities to see how various technologies and social conventions shape literate identities, making possible particular social roles and not others. Wikis do this, but so can many other writing technologies. Studying and participating on wikis just happens to be one way to achieve this goal because we can easily observe and experience how already-published-yet-still-editable-by-anyone texts are not the sole or primary medium through which writers and readers negotiate textual meaning. In this way, the hypersocial-interactive model of writing may prove useful for those seeking to account for and examine the social roles readers can play in the use of digital writing technologies. Additionally, it may well facilitate students' participation in the dynamic and varied writing publics that inhabit the contemporary technocultural landscape of textual production.

Future research might also investigate how the author/audience dynamic found on Wowpedia, a popular culture fan-produced site, might play out in settings with higher stakes such as in professional settings—engineering, medical, legal, etc.—that require texts be written by those with specialized knowledge and in which the consequences can be profound. To offer one intriguing example, we can see how even a traditionally hierarchical organization such as the U.S. Army is attempting to leverage what wikis can offer in terms of collaborative knowledge production (Cohen). The Army's recent employment of MilWiki for its Wikified Army Field Guide empowers soldiers, "from the privates to the generals," to update Army tactics, techniques, and procedures from the field collaboratively with the understanding that those in the field need the best and most up-to-date information:

> As the battlefield changes rapidly, the field manuals must keep pace. Under the traditional process—in which a select few were charged with drafting and updating the field manuals—the manuals often failed to reflect the latest knowledge of Soldiers on the ground. (U.S. Army)

As an Army veteran, I find it interesting that this site has been developed by an organization that is highly dependent on strict hierarchies, yet from what we know of knowledge production on successful wiki projects, the Army must to some degree rely upon distributed participatory design and collective intelligence, whereas in the past only those recognized as experts were authorized to write the manuals. There isn't much information available about this project, but it "receive[d the] Army's top knowledge management honor" (Davidson) and was recognized by the White House's *Open Government Initiative*. One question we would need to ask is whether contributors to MilWiki take on more collaborative mindsets than those who had previously been charged with writing the field manuals. Another is whether soldiers are interacting on talk pages. Based on my limited knowledge of the project, it models itself after Wikipedia and uses the same software. In addition, the project's contributors are evidently a mix of "organizational newcomers or subject

matter experts" (Davidson). Therefore, we are talking about more than user testing, and the hypersocial-interactive model of writing and the reader-as-writer identity might apply, if somewhat ironically, in this context.

Following the example of the Army's Field Manuals, in addition to my study of Wowpedia, it is clear that the future of reading Clive Thompson calls for is already upon us. With wikis, readers can easily interact with writers and other readers on talk pages. As I have shown in this article, writing on Wowpedia goes a step beyond what Thompson describes and Fitzpatrick puts in practice. With tongue in cheek, we might call readers-as-writers, as I conceptualize them, the *future* future of reading. Contributors' notions of the nature of audience include the virtual and actual as well as the participatory because wiki writing includes readers becoming at-will coauthors of texts written by others. The implications for the future of reading is that these collaborative processes will be much more productive if those involved know how to effectively participate.

NOTES

[1] Wowpedia.org is a project fork of Wowwiki.com. In this case, a fork, commonly associated with open source software development, is a legal copying of all of Wowwiki's content to start a new wiki, as allowed by Wowwiki's Creative Commons License. Wikipedia, for instance, operates under the same license. This forking occurred in October 2010 after a dispute between most of the Wowwiki administration—including the wider community—and Wikia, the wikifarm hosting Wowwiki. I am currently investigating this event. In the process of this forking, most of Wowwiki's administrators and many of its editors moved to Wowpedia. In addition, though my data collection for this article occurred before the forking, all of that content resides now at Wowpedia. Therefore, to avoid confusion and follow the community, throughout the remainder of this article, I will refer to Wowpedia rather than Wowwiki.

[2] Wikipedia contains more than 33,761,906 content pages and 4.6 million articles in 1100 portals (i.e., categories) to Wowpedia's 122,993 content pages, including articles. In addition, Wikipedia has 22,482,949 registered users with 130,101 users having "performed an action" in the last 30 days. Wowpedia, on the other hand, currently has 83,389 registered users, while the number of users who have "performed an action" in the last 30 days is 188.

[3] Although many of the featured articles' talk pages include more rapid exchanges of asynchronous talk (near synchronous, at times), by "at the same time" I also mean to include any collaboration over minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years because members of the community routinely come and go, visiting talk pages, picking up threads of discussion when noticed or of interest. That said, the nature of wiki collaborations is distinctly different than that with codices—due to the fact that articles are never considered final drafts. Discussions and associated article changes may occur over a matter of minutes or extend over months—whereas a codex was in the possession of one person at a time, and therefore, readers could not interact with other readers or, of course, the writer. And, as I have already noted, wiki collaboration involves the ability to edit texts and so differs from, for example, common classroom uses of peer collaboration that focus on readers giving individual writers feedback.

[4] "UTC" refers to Coordinated Universal Time, which is, according to Wikipedia, "the primary time standard by which the world regulates clocks and time. It is one of several closely related successors to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)" ("Coordinated Universal Time"). In some cases, readers may notice missing timestamps; on Wowpedia contributors who do not sign their comments using four tildes (~~~~), which on MediaWiki automatically creates the signature and timestamp for a comment, may have manually typed in their username or an administrator has added the user's name to the comment.

[5] A"Neutral Point of View" (often referred as NPOV) is a principle that describes an authoring or editing perspective representing views fairly and without bias (or at least attempting to remove as much bias as possible). On Wowpedia, an editor has to assume a neutral point of view when writing articles" ("Neutrality policy").

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(Re)Placing the Literacy Narrative: Composing in Google Maps

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ABSTRACT

This article relies on maps created by students in Google Maps as they explored their literacy sponsors, in an effort to question and explore the future of the traditional literacy narrative. By focusing on the "trade routes" of their literacy acquisition, the students produced digital maps that problematized the linear narrative of progress inherent in many literacy narratives. Excerpts from students' maps illustrate the temporal and spatial relationships underlying literacy sponsorship.

KEYWORDS

mapping; literacy narrative; literacy sponsors; digital composing

> *Mapping not only represents reality, but also has an active role in the social construction of that reality.* (Dodge 115)
>
> *Is the literacy narrative dead?* (Bryant)

Maps, mapping, and being mapped have become commonplace in many of our, and our students', lives. We experience new and everyday places through digital maps that change as we move, both on foot and in vehicles. Wireless networks and mobile communication devices ensure that we can map and be mapped virtually anywhere and anytime. In turn, such maps of evolving time and place may prove useful as we engage students in digital and networked literacies and as we ask them to consider their roles in the creation and consumption of these maps. This article relies on such ubiquitous mapping as a response to the question "Is the literacy narrative dead?" The question was posed in a recent thread on the writing program administrator email list (Bryant) and resulted in over forty replies defending, questioning, and revising the commonplace literacy narrative. While some of the debate surrounded the usefulness of the literacy narrative genre, the most interesting contributions shared innovative approaches to the literacy narrative, including the use of music, video, and social media. As Jeffrey Grabill wrote in a recent blog post for *Edutopia*, "It

is often said that technologies don't get interesting until they become culturally meaningful. I think this is the case with the technologies of digital writing." My recent first-year writing class invoked this idea in its focus on literacy issues. I attempted to reinvigorate and reinvent the literacy narrative by focusing on a "culturally meaningful" technology, but a technology removed from much discussion of writing, including literacy narratives, digital or not—Google Maps. In this class, I not only introduced a variation on digital writing but also revised the traditional literacy narrative—a ubiquitous genre in much of first-year composition that also finds some ringing its death knell. Ultimately, my goal was to move beyond using an application such as Google Maps just because it is cool, or just because "we can" (Darlin), with hopes of complicating students' linear understandings of literacy acquisition and literacy sponsorship. Specifically, I aimed to begin problematizing static views of literacy and literacy acquisition by locating literacy geographically and temporally (Trainor). In what follows, I outline this attempt, while also reflecting on the digital writing that a group of students produced in the form of maps.

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Most discussions or pedagogical activities involving literacy narratives rely on the work of Deborah Brandt, particularly her concept of "literacy sponsors." My students (all first- or second-year students in a general education writing course) had read and discussed Brandt's concept of literacy sponsorship[1] before embarking on the literacy mapping project. They were introduced to literacy sponsors as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, or model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (166). In Brandt's use of the concept, sponsors hold the power, as they "set the terms for access to literacy and wield powerful incentives for compliance and loyalty" (167). Yet students were troubled by just how true Brandt's acknowledgement of the "reciprocal relationship" sponsors engage in with those they "underwrite" might be in their own lives, especially as they engaged in literacy not of their own choosing. Such a discovery would, I hoped, lead students to reflect on Brandt's "economies of literacy" and how such relationships are bound in particular realities of time and place, including economic, social, material, and ideological.

Moreover, and most important for my purposes in this article, Brandt reminds us that sponsors control the "trade routes" of literacies in a community, trade routes (and literacies) that can differ and shift based on time and place. Specifically, I hoped to spatialize sponsorship in maps by developing a visualization of the "trade routes" students encountered in their literacy acquisition. These trade routes highlight where the personal relationship between sponsor and sponsored interacts with the

context of communities, institutions, and economies. Within these trade routes, many students discovered and shared moments of intervention, where the reciprocity of sponsorship allowed for intervention and agency by the sponsored. Additionally, students could see how their trade routes were similar to classmates' trade routes; this similarity allowed us as a class to visualize somewhat abstract concepts, especially for first- and second-year students. Ultimately, the temporal and spatial must be considered to "see" these trade routes and their overlap (or disconnect). Mapping of literacy sponsorship allows such consideration and intervention on the part of students, and it complicates the linear narrative of progress found in and encouraged by many iterations of the traditional literacy narrative writing prompt (see Pandey).

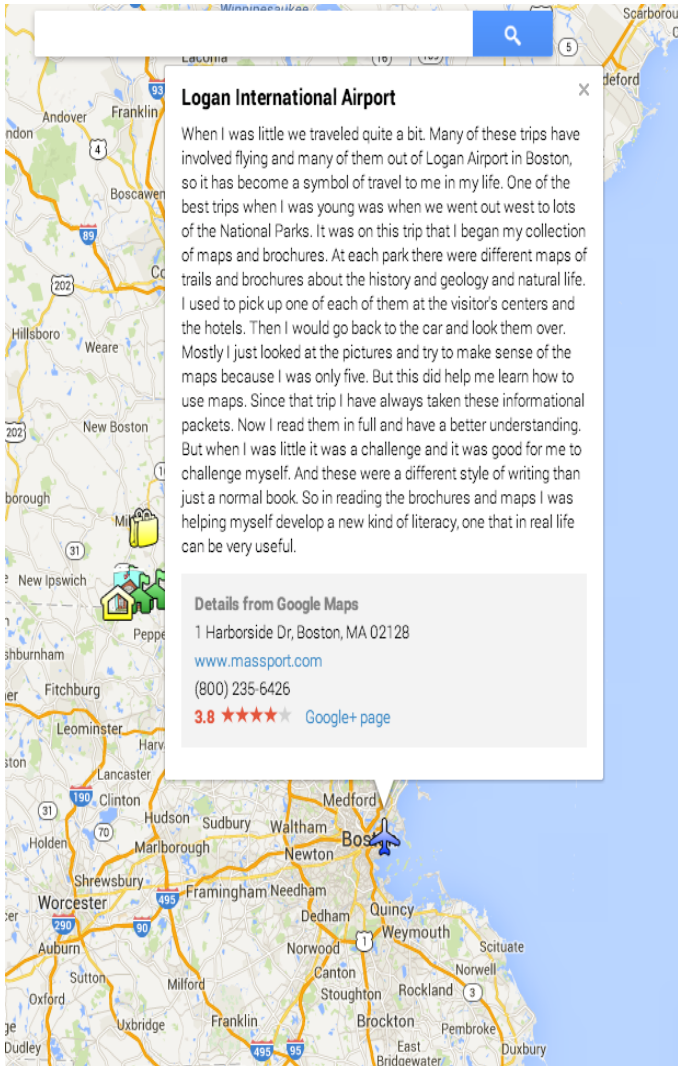


Figure 1: Excerpt of Lisa's Map, focusing on Logan International Airport.

And so I begin with a map, with one marker on a student's Google map focusing on significant literacy sponsors and, in turn, trade routes. Lisa's map (see Figure 1) provided the class with a visual, graphical, and mobile influence on the "where" of literacy development. She includes locations found on other student maps, including libraries and schools, but she also admits to collecting brochures, maps, and "informational packets." Lisa includes Logan International Airport on her map, noting that her family frequently traveled in and out of the airport, leading to her interest in "different style[s] of writing." Reflecting on her map creation, Lisa writes,

> Most of these places were where I learned to read and write, but many of them are places that helped my passion for reading grow and expand. Many of the places are linked to

> people who helped me learn, such as my family at my house and my teachers at school. I was surprised at some of the places I remember, those that were not required in the development of my reading and writing skills.

Not only does this brief glance into Lisa's map of literacy sponsorship highlight relationships, but it also highlights the range of people and institutions influencing Lisa's literacy sponsorship at that time and in those places, both, in her words, required and not required. Such a range is tied directly to the when and the where of those locations in Lisa's life, as well as her movement (routes) among various people, institutions, and infrastructures.

As I continue beyond Lisa's map in this essay, I investigate the "why" of a particular type of Web 2.0 technology, Google Maps, and a particular genre, the literacy narrative. Such literacy mapping foregrounds the temporal and spatial; in turn, we can see the trade routes of these students' literacy acquisition, creating potential impact both in the writing classroom and in how our students make meaning of their experiences, how mapping constructs that remembered reality (Dodge). I focus on how such mapping technology (or information visualization applications) influences how we approach narrative, especially the linearity of the literacy narrative, as well as the spatial component of literacy. Moreover, taking such a tack with students introduces and complicates the relationship between literacy and place, resulting in "narratives" that situate disparate literacy sponsors such as the cinema, boarding schools, and grandparents in spatial and temporal proximity to each other. Such a project allowed students not only to read about literacy sponsorship but also to begin unpacking the reciprocal relationships inherent in such sponsorship, with some attention to the "when" and the "where" of literacy infrastructures. For the literacy narrative to avoid death, it may need more than a revision. It may need a replacement of the linear narrative structure such a genre finds itself stuck in—an update of both the genre and the key concept, literacy sponsorship. Furthermore, and as will be detailed below, such a pedagogical revision follows the trajectory in writing studies towards the digital and spatial.

This article, then, illustrates Madeline Sorapure's claim that mapping applications, along with other information visualization applications, "enable us and our students to make the move from consuming to producing visual representations of information" (60). In such a move, one that echoes Martin Dodge's depiction of mapping as an active construction of reality, we offer an approach to the composing process, and to our understanding of the "when" and the "where" of literacy development, that focuses more attention on the materiality of our "narratives." Through exploring the "why" of using Google maps, I push students to begin exploring the "when" and "where" of literacy sponsorship (after all, you can only make so much progress in one semester). Such digital composing and mapping not only begins to complicate students' understandings of literacy but also highlights why digital writing matters (and perhaps, why the literacy narrative may still matter).

THE COURSE

The map from Lisa emerged from a general education writing and letters course focused on literacy, specifically the history of literacy in our northeast state, and was titled "From Slater to Slate: The Rise of Literacy in [New England State]." The course enrolled first- and second-year students fulfilling a general education requirement. A portion of the course description reads:

> Locally, debates surrounding literacy education involving immigration, technology, and employment are not new, especially in the state of []. Due to its history, size, and current economic troubles, [the state] provides a unique perspective on the relationship between literacy education and industrial and economic change. This course will introduce students to the history of literacy education in [the state], including the impact of the industrial revolution on literacy education. Students will read a variety of documents and texts including biographies, essays, scholarly articles, newspaper stories, personal writings, and testing materials. These texts will allow students to gain perspective on and grapple with issues such as child labor, public education, mill communities, the rise of Sunday schools, and the legacies of such industrial change in the state today. Ultimately, students will rely on the historical readings to engage with today's economic change and literacy education.

For readings, I paired local documents, histories, and primary materials with readings from *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Throughout the semester, the students completed four projects designed to reflect, illustrate, complicate, and extend the readings on literacy: a literacy mapping project, an archival document analysis, a museum exhibit proposal, and a group presentation focused on literacy centers. Such an approach to the course, and to the individual project on mapping literacy sponsorships, emerges from the field's growing interest in the spaces and places of literate activities, as well as digital writing technologies. Students were encouraged to analyze and produce literacy-related artifacts, introducing a temporal and geographic approach to the study of literacy. For example, the final project focused on literacy centers required demographic and economic analysis of a specific community to understand the context within which literacy centers operate.

MAPPING AND COMPOSING

The geographical, and therefore spatial, turn in Composition Studies can be largely attributed to Nedra Reynolds's work on the places of student composing, both physical and metaphorical. Reynolds writes that "[g]eography gives us the metaphorical and methodological tools to change our ways of imagining writing through both movement and dwelling—to see writing as a set of spatial practices informed by everyday negotiations of space" (*Geographies* 6). Ultimately, Reynolds pushes us to see the materiality of writing and, in turn, literacy. Her push for a "geographic emphasis" asks the field to "link the material conditions to the activities of particular spaces, whether those be campuses, classrooms, office, computer labs, distance learning sites, or hotels" ("Composition's" 30).

"Introducing literacy sponsorship—the reciprocal relationship between sponsors and sponsored in terms of support, access, and regulation to literacy—through Google maps illustrates the key concepts behind an infrastructural framework; concepts that, while not introduced to students, provide language to discuss how such a mapping activity exposes the complicated nature of the "where," as well as the "when," in our literacy sponsorships (Devoss, Cushman, and Grabill 20-1)."

In many ways, this linking echoes Harvey Graff's explorations of literacy development in specific cities and regions of the nineteenth century, noting the ways in which literacy levels reflect material conditions. However, Reynolds's and Graff's work also supports an infrastructural approach to analyzing composing and literacy sponsorship in general. Danielle DeVoss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeffrey Grabill rely on an infrastructural framework to understand new media composing in education settings. For my purposes, the infrastructural framework helps unpack the "why" by connecting the "when" with the "where" in my pedagogical approach to introducing literacy sponsorship in the classroom and, in particular, in this Google mapping project. In short, the "when" is key to literacy sponsorship, and the infrastructural framework highlights that literacy sponsorship "is more than material, is never static, and is always emerging" (Devoss, Cushman, and Grabill 22). My goal was to use mapping as a means to unpack and spatialize literacy sponsorship, while also uncovering the reciprocal relationships underlying sponsorship. In that sense, I was also pushing beyond the when to connect it with the where, since our literacy sponsorship maps include time and place.

Introducing literacy sponsorship—the reciprocal relationship between sponsors and sponsored in terms of support, access, and regulation to literacy—through Google maps illustrates the key concepts behind an infrastructural framework; concepts that, while not introduced to students, provide language to discuss how such a mapping activity exposes the complicated nature of the "where," as well as the "when," in our literacy sponsorships (Devoss, Cushman, and Grabill 20-21). Moreover, such concepts provide elements of how we understand the "trade routes" apparent in literacy sponsorship. As Devoss, Cushman, and Grabill describe, the characteristics of infrastructure are as follows:

- *Embeddedness*. Infrastructure is "sunk" into, inside of, other structures, social arrangements and technologies.
- *Transparency*. Infrastructure is transparent to use, in the sense that it does not have to be reinvented each time or assembled for each task, but it invisibly supports those tasks.
- *Reach or scope*. This may be either spatial or temporal—infrastructure has reach beyond a single event or one-site practice.
- *Learned as part of membership*. The taken-for-grantedness of artifacts and organizational arrangements is a sine qua non of membership in a community of practice [...]. Strangers and

outsiders encounter infrastructure as a target object to be learned about. New participants acquire a naturalized familiarity with its objects as they become members.

- *Links with conventions of practice*. Infrastructure both shapes and is shaped by the conventions of a community of practice.
- *Embodiment of standards*. Modified by scope and often by conflicting conventions, infrastructure takes on transparency by plugging into other infrastructures and tools in a standardized fashion.
- *Built on an installed base*. Infrastructure does not grow de novo; it wrestles with the "inertia of the installed base" and inherits strengths and limitations from that base.
- *Becomes visible upon breakdown*. The normally invisible quality of working infrastructure becomes visible when it breaks. (20-21)

Relying on such terminology, we can compare very different maps through a similar analytical lens. An infrastructural approach also offers language to describe, investigate, and expose the complicated networks involved in each student's literacy sponsorship map. Essentially, we can understand such literacy maps as connecting the "where" to the "when" of DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill's infrastructural approach. Literacy narratives, representing a select and personal timeline, progress through different literacy infrastructures, reflecting select and personal locations. In short, the language of infrastructure can allow a lens through which to understand the trade routes found on students' maps.

Of late, scholars find the where of composing and the materiality of literacy complicated by the abundance of, and enthusiasm for, digital writing technologies—as such, the digital and geographical turns have intertwined. This merging, or "changed environment," has led some to call for a revised approach to teaching digital writing (Grabill; WIDE). Subsequently, some have positioned student writers as more akin to cartographers. Christopher Schmidt writes that "new writing technologies will continue to change not only the place of writing but also the writing of place, allowing students to represent the environment and the world with unprecedented fidelity" (303). This visual representation of information and its effects on students and writing gains further attention from Sorapure's work on information visualization applications. Pushing for teachers to incorporate information visualization applications into their writing classes, Sorapure writes, "as students interact with these programs and find, organize, analyze, and visualize data, they are exercising rhetorical and technical skills that are increasingly relevant in this information age" (69). The applications and activities Sorapure asks her students to accomplish, including text, personal, and social visualizations, "provide yet another way of thinking about the role of the visual as it stimulates, accompanies, critiques, supplements, and/or replaces writing" (60). They also provide another way for students to investigate the relationships identified in specific literacy sponsor relationships.

In order to introduce the materiality of literacy, Schmidt relies on maps and Web 2.0 mapping applications such as Google Maps to "help students think about how the digitalization of new

media fundamentally restructures the 'place' of rhetoric" (313).[2] Encouraging students to consider the "political and economic motives of those who 'write' the map," Schmidt contends that Web 2.0 mapping applications allow students insight into "a form of multimodal spatial writing that has already been subject to centuries of development and study" (313). Perhaps Web 2.0 applications, such as Google Maps, have gained their most substantive implementation in the classroom in Dale Jacobs, Hollie Adams, and Janine Morris's pedagogy, captured in "Writing New York: Using Google Maps as a Platform for Electronic Portfolios." Jacobs, Adams, and Morris exposed students to the rhetorical nature of maps, hoping they would come "to recognize that in producing a map they are essentially *creating* a subjective notion of space rather than *reproducing* an objective reality" (115). In short, the authors saw Google Maps as way to combine "screen culture and street culture" (116). And so, they asked students to create pre- and post-maps using Google Maps surrounding a field trip to New York City. The post-map functioned as a portfolio, allowing students to capture their encounters with the city—essentially using Google Maps as a writing platform. Ultimately, we see writing instructors, and the field as a whole, implementing and reflecting the geographic and digital shifts as a way for students to make meaning of their places in the world or, to make meaning of the where and when in those reciprocal relationships underlying literacy sponsorship. Even Jacobs, Adams, and Morris's course design, while clearly focused on the place of New York City, reflected a temporal concern, allowing students to reflect on when they experienced New York City.

Literacy narratives have become a widely-accepted genre for students and teachers to explore and reflect on their literacy sponsorship stories. In our first year writing program, the literacy narrative is one of the required genres of first-year writing courses (and I assume we are not alone). The field has invested heavily in the potential for such an exploration, in which students tell the story of their literacy, even digital literacy, development. It is safe to claim that the assignment/genre has been canonized in most composition textbooks, even in recent books reflecting the digital turn in composition (Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, and Sirc). Yet as noted in the introduction, the death of literacy narrative has been predicted, prompting discussion pointing to its demise, eventual demise, or metamorphosis. Beyond first-year students, many of us in the field also investigate and collect literacy narratives as a means for uncovering how our stories, as well as the stories of others, reflect our similarities and differences, witnessed in Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher's *Literate Lives in the Digital Age* and Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives*. During the early stages of this mapping project, I also ask students to consider their (traditional) literacy narratives—narratives of progress, of trade routes that move forward in similar fashion. Ultimately, we read Brandt's "Sponsors of Literacy," as well as work from Graff, to complicate the linearity found in many student literacy narratives. Such work does begin to situate these literacy trade routes within specific times and places. By shifting the literacy narrative to an investigation of specific times, places, and relationships, I ask students to produce narratives that are related spatially and temporally rather than through a linear progression or hierarchy (see Appendix A). In turn, I also seek to avoid the reflective triumph of writers, as they retell their journey to literacy enlightenment.

As Iswari Pandey notes, "[l]iteracy narratives, whether print or electronic, usually end on a linear, progressive note" (252). Pointing towards the potential for a disruption of such linearity, Schmidt indicates, "[A] spatial representation of argument rather than a linear argument … is a reflection of the mass cultural move from relying upon a codex information storage system, in which a linear argument is the dominant form of storage, toward forms of argument that reflect and exploit database-driven forms of writing" (305). Dodge, writing about maps as virtual research methods, maintains, "[c]heap, powerful computer graphics on desktop personal computers (PCs) enables much more expressive and interactive digital cartography" (114). Like Schmidt, my goal in this project is to complicate literacy development and concepts such as literacy sponsorship by "emphasizing the spatial aspects of writing rather than the chronological aspects of writing" (313); in other words, to echo Dodge, allowing literacy narratives to be more interactive, or differently interactive. Working through these maps, the students and I document the relationships, of people, time, and place, supporting and regulating literacy sponsorship. To be clear, I am not avoiding narrative—students are telling their stories, for sure. However, by focusing on the when and where of literacy sponsorship, I intended to illustrate, for example, that "the politics of place undercut the prevailing myths about the computer and the Internet as neutral and world-wide medium" (Pandey 252). I wanted students to realize, or begin to consider, that literacy sponsorship is a complicated network—trade routes—of various elements, including technologies, resources, people, and institutions. While Jacobs, Adams, and Morris see the potential for students using Google Maps to imagine and reflect on their experiences with a city, such as New York City, this project asks students to begin reflecting on the when and where of their, and their classmates', literacy development. In other words, students can produce and share their stories, their writing, through a medium other than what they might expect in a first-year writing course. Ultimately, this approach also personalizes those reciprocal relationships undergirding the concept of literacy sponsorship; the infrastructures of "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (Brandt 166). By focusing on the when and where of sponsorship, students recall neighborhoods, after-school programs, former houses, and deceased relatives, introducing both the when and the where of key moments in literacy acquisition. Echoing Jacobs, Adams, and Morris, the project, I hoped, "would better prompt students to consider how the place they visited or the event they took part in was necessarily tied to its spatial context—to the cultural, political, or economic fabric of its surrounding neighborhood" (116). In other words, students would visualize the complicated infrastructures underlying one's literacy development, whether digital or print, and how literacy infrastructures capture a particular time and place, as well as movement, or trade route, through that time and place that is bigger than themselves.

THE WHEN AND WHERE OF STUDENTS' LITERACY NARRATIVES

In this section, I share some sample student maps, as well as the students' reflections on their maps. Obviously, the examples are not a complete representation of student work; it would prove impossible to capture all students' maps.[3] Nonetheless, my goal is to begin a discussion of digital writing and literacy sponsorship through such examples, to introduce how such an assignment can begin a conversation on the when and where of literacy sponsorship. To reiterate, students used Google Maps, particularly the My Maps function, to create public maps of their literacy sponsors (for more on the "how to" of Google Maps see Jacobs, Adams, and Morris). We shared these as a class, and in some cases, I created a layered map of various student maps so the class could get the "big picture" of our collective map. Students tended to immediately name and locate the obvious sponsors: elementary schools, libraries, teachers, and family members appeared quickly on maps. However, some included less obvious places—or places more unique to their location and network. For example, one student wrote, "I learned that many literacy sponsors are located around the community where children are brought up . . . My town obviously had many resources for early literacy which makes me extremely lucky." He continues,

> Bow Tie Cinema is the movie theater in my hometown. It may be weird that a movie theater supported my literacy; however, they really got me into reading when I was 8 years old. In the third grade Bow Tie had a 'reading challenge' where we could get free movie passes if we read 5 books a month. It would be so exciting for me and my elementary school buddies to earn free movie passes at the end of every month and I did a lot more reading because of it.

What also "appear" in these maps are the missing, or not yet developed, places of literacy sponsorship. Years from now, it may prove impossible to do such mapping without regular appearances of Starbucks and other coffee shops, as well as mobile devices, including laptops and iPads. But, again, there is a when that is central to the where of these maps.

June's Map

Included in June's map are locations such as Borders bookstore, her elementary school, her mom, and *Sesame Street*. Also noticeable on June's map is the location of a swim and tennis club (see Fig. 2). Writing about the club, June admits, "The fact my camp was even pushing literacy and reading seemed crazy to me at the time, but now I realize why. The directors of my camp obviously realized that literacy was so important that it should not only be a part of school, but also camp during the summer." More importantly, June concedes that the mapping activity highlighted for her the profound role her mom played in creating the where of June's literacy development: "A lot of my sponsors connect back to my mom being so involved in my life, which makes me realize the most important part of my education was my family. My family gave me the opportunities to

even get these sponsors and I really owe it to them to bring me to these places that take literacy education very seriously." June highlights the important role that membership, whether in a family or organization, plays in one's literacy development. In fact, membership gains priority over a concept such as resources in June's map.

In addition, June's map offers insight into how those locations, and in some cases institutions such as school, bookstore, and tennis and swim club, reflect both a place and a time. She admits that the club is now closed, and one assumes the Borders store is closed, highlighting a shift from bookstores to online book retailers such as Amazon. Beyond zooming into one place on her map, June also situates her map, or her literacy sponsorships, within various institutional and infrastructural

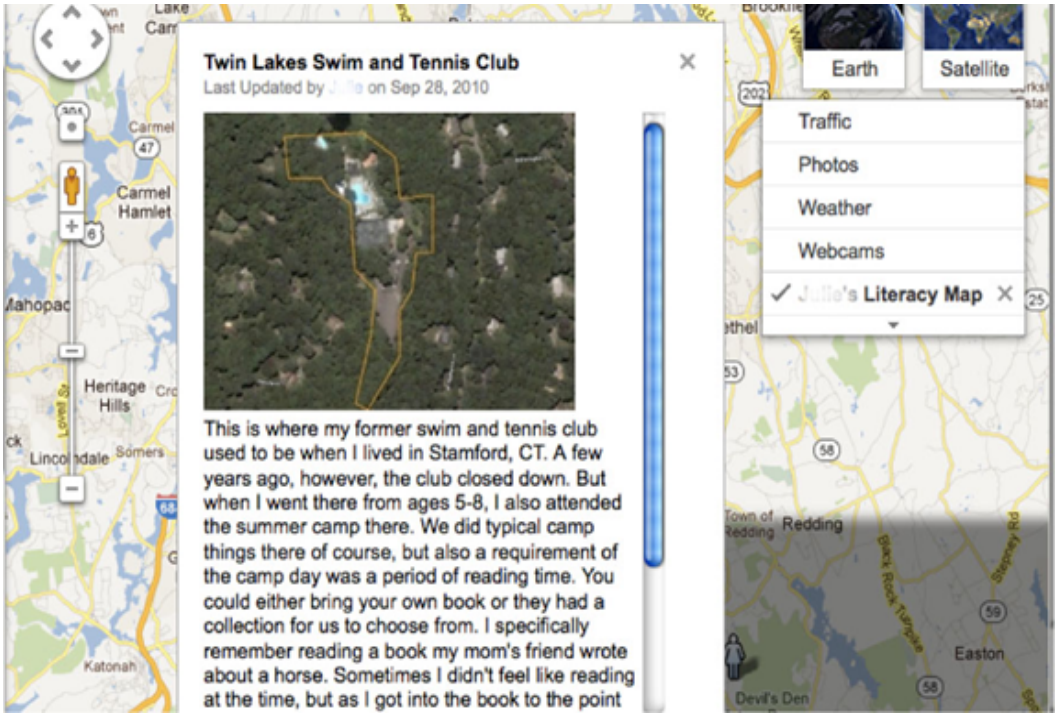


Figure 2: Excerpt of June's Map with Swim and Tennis Club.

moments and places. For example, we could zoom out to an overview of the northeast United States, the city of Stamford, or the state of Connecticut. We could look at the infrastructure of her public school district, including data such as test scores, free and reduced lunches, or per student spending. In addition, we could look at the role of summer camps and private swim and tennis clubs within the lives of school-aged children; we could even map these clubs in Stamford with other institutions such as daycares, YMCAs, and other summer camps. In this course, we do spend some time with socioeconomic, census, and education data as a means of examining how literacy might fit into those statistics, trends, and maps. Students are encouraged to consider the layers we

might place on such maps in order to complicate the current view.

Mallory's Map

Like many of her peers, Mallory's map includes traditional educational institutions, such as elementary school and high school, but it also highlights other people and places unique to Mallory and the when and where of her literacy development. For example, she includes the Jewish Community Center, her grandparents' residence in Florida, and a ballet studio. In addition, she acknowledges the role a high school internship played in her literacy development (see Fig. 3). Ultimately, Mallory's map highlights the urban nature of her youth, or her "journeys and adventures," as she puts it. As the only Catholic student in a Jewish classroom, she states, "I learned a lot here too, especially how to interact with an entirely different ethnic group." This map, according to Mallory, illustrates that "the schools you attend, the clubs you join, the activities you engage in, [and] the projects you pursue all boost your literacy abilities in life." Beyond exposing the role membership plays in her literacy map, Mallory also points to the varying conventions of practice present in each of these different settings. She contrasts the learning done in ballet, which included both physical learning, as well as an understanding of ballet terms and jargon, with that of her internship. She mediates the activities of volunteers through the composing and sharing of instructions, connecting both online and face-to-face communication.

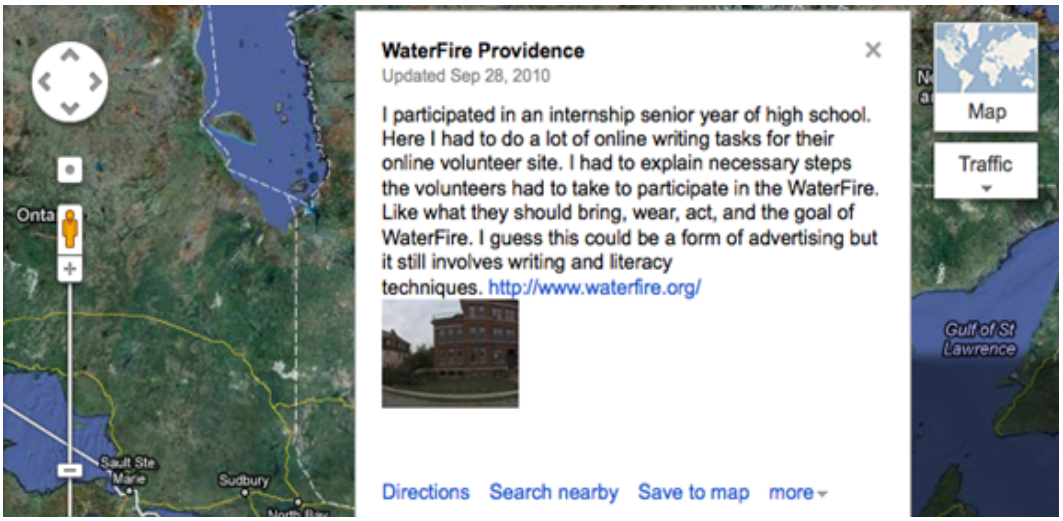


Figure 3: Excerpt of Mallory's Map, including internship location.

In addition, the reach and scope of Mallory's map bridges geographic distance and generations. While raised in an urban environment, Mallory was not bound to such an environment. Through internships, an exposure to Jewish classmates, and travel to Florida, Mallory presents a varied and diverse map highlighting generational and geographical networks. Such reach and scope, both temporally and spatially, is visualized in such a map, a visualization unavailable in a narrative

re-telling of one's literacy sponsorship. In other words, the linearity of literacy development, a progression through sponsors and events, is flattened. Instead, Mallory can look at her entire map, or zoom into one time and place on that map and in her life.

Lynn's Map

Writing about the piano lessons her parents forced her to take, Lynn comments, "Whenever I was going through a rough time, I turned to the piano. Whether it was playing emotional songs, which were already composed, or trying to write my own songs, it was my escape from the world around me." Lynn's map also includes computer games, an aunt, and cheerleading. However, it is the piano lesson description where Lynn notes not just her parents' influence on her literacy development, but how those piano lessons at Mrs. McGravey's home broadened her understanding of music and composing (see Fig. 4). In this sense, the piano, or the playing of the piano photograph, captures a combination of human and non-human elements central to this place and time: piano, parents, piano teacher, piano teacher's home, etc. But in her reflection, Lynn is also sure to point to the role of a desktop computer in her early literacy development as key. Such an object represents a culmination of people, places, and cultural shifts. Moreover, Lynn was one of the few students who located a computer on their maps. However, this example also points to the limits of Google Maps: students must choose one label and one image, or one tag, for the marker on the map. Google maps cannot capture the layered and nuanced (both local and global) forces, institutions, people, and objects underlying and promoting that marker on the map. In turn, we, viewers of the map, see a computer or a piano, relying on a brief narrative for context for a rather complicated trade route.

Ultimately, Lynn acknowledges that a diversity of literacy sponsors proves key to her, and others', development, noting the surprising role "activities, people, places, and technology" all play in creating a place. This diversity of elements on Lynn's map highlights the ways in which infrastructure may only become visible upon breakdown, even if such visualization is limited by the software application. A narrative approach may not facilitate seeing connections between desktop computers, cheerleading, and piano lessons, especially in the context of one's literacy development, but mapping may also not allow for such networked viewing or sharing. To gain visibility, such disparate elements require not just the telling but also the placing in time and space—the placing, unplacing, and movement through literacy infrastructures.

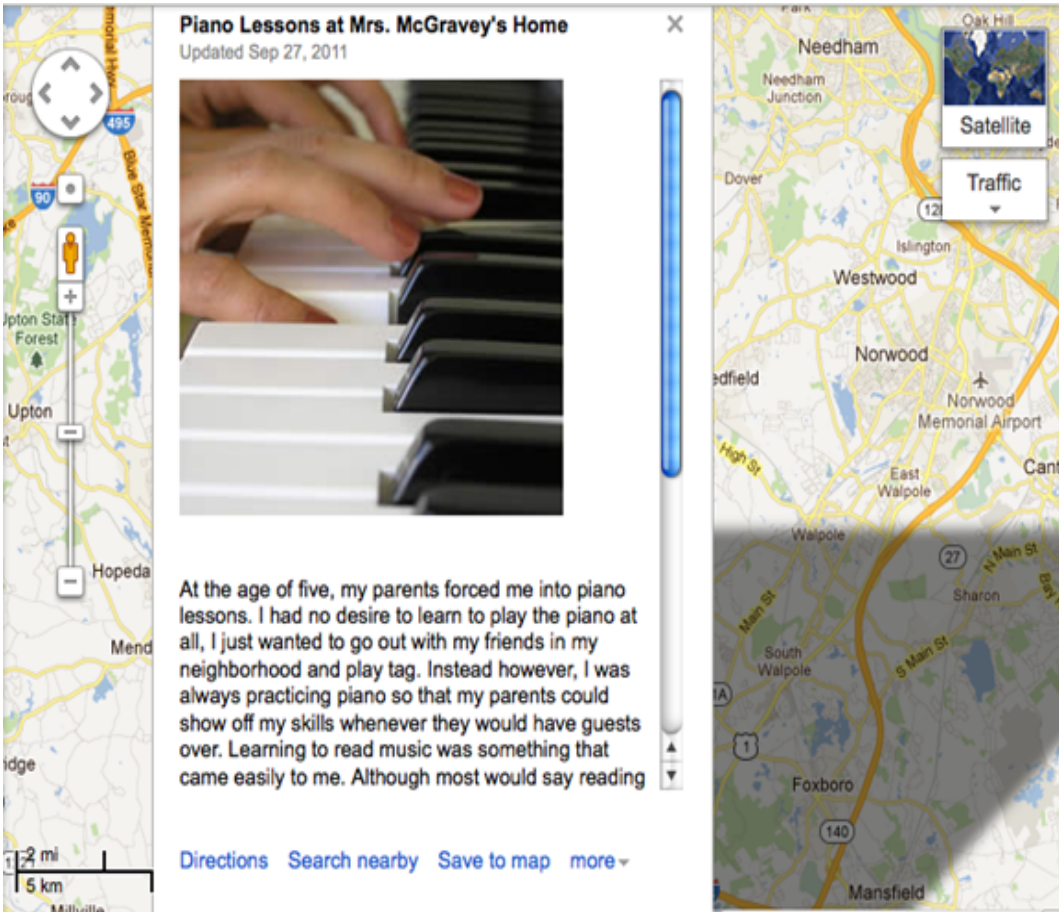


Figure 4: Excerpt of Lynn's Map and piano lessons.

Angie's Map

Finally, I offer Angie's map. Angie was quick to admit in class that her map looked different than others, since she was raised in an inner city. While many of Angie's locations look similar to the locations of other students' maps in the class, Angie's map does highlight the ways in which educational policy is influencing the role of place on literacy development and sponsorship. In turn, Angie's map asked the class to reconsider the place-based data we had looked at earlier in the course, data such as test scores, per student spending, and census data. The answer, as Angie's map indicates, can be as functional as moving students out of their place, at least for the school day. As an inner city resident, within a district housing an underperforming high school, Angie was selected to participate in a program that bussed her out to a higher performing suburban high school (see Fig. 5). In her reflection on the map, Angie notes, "seeing these areas highlighted has opened to my eyes all the opportunities that have been handed to me." Clearly, she sees programs, such as the METCO program, that bus students to higher performing schools, as "opportunities"—and an opportunity she

was lucky to receive. Angie was adamant that she did not see the where of her literacy development as a weakness but rather as a strength and opportunity. In a fairly homogenous class, Angie was outspoken about how different (she assumed) her experience was from her classmates' experiences. However, in the telling of her story through her map, Angie also complicated the class discussions of literacy sponsorship and the role of power and regulation in sponsor relationships.

Her map reflects the overlapping and at times contradictory relationships found within one student's map. To attach a linear, progressive narrative arc to Angie's literacy narrative would overlook how place both limited and empowered her literacy development. But her map also highlights the importance of connecting the when and the where of literacy sponsorship. Educational policies

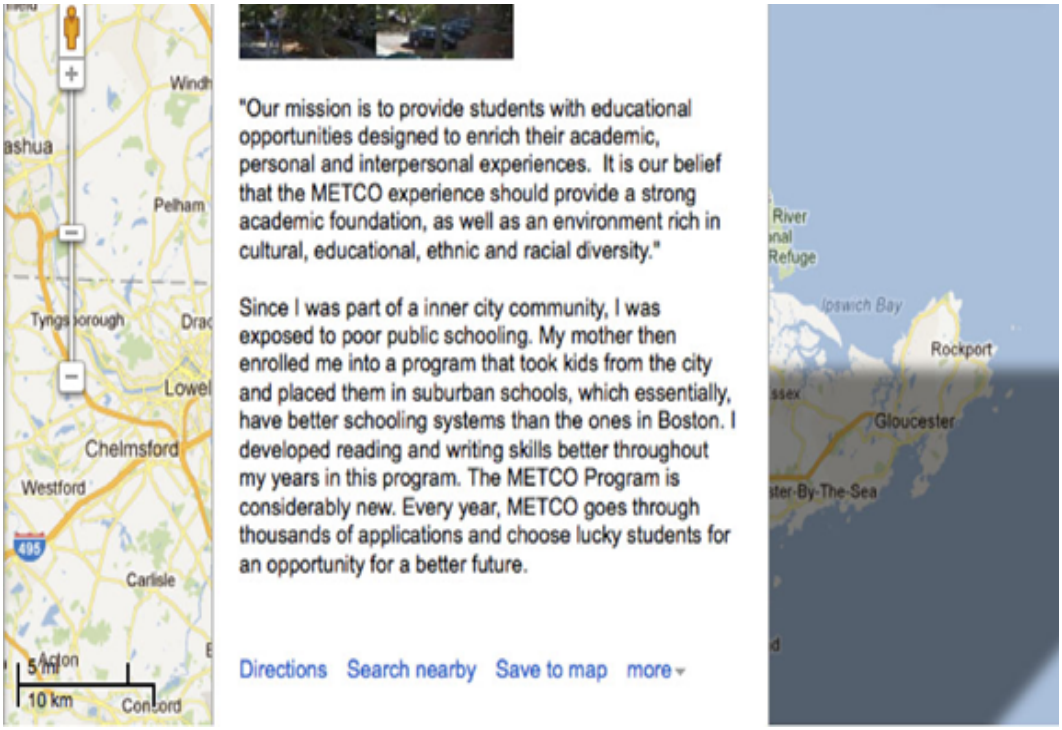


Figure 5: Excerpt of Angie's Map, highlighting the METCO Program.

change and the educational infrastructures change through time and place. In this way, Angie's map is emblematic of the overall aim of this project, while also reflective of the difficulties in trying to tell literacy sponsorship stories. Such projects open up discussion, or introduce discussions, on the complicated and changing networks of literacy sponsorship. Maps and narratives, representing the same student's journey, can look drastically different and can open up larger discussions of national and local education policies. Zooming out, Angie's entire map shows locations but also a route—a route from her home to school, highlighting a particular route for her literacy education (Figure 6 captures a more complete map). In addition, she includes a location for the Massachusetts Department

of Elementary and Secondary Education. Moreover, Angie and Mallory, both self-described inner city and urban residents, created maps that do not neatly sync with each other on the whole. As those literacy infrastructures change and develop over time and place, we see various reflections on how such infrastructures were changed, negotiated, and impacted by these students.

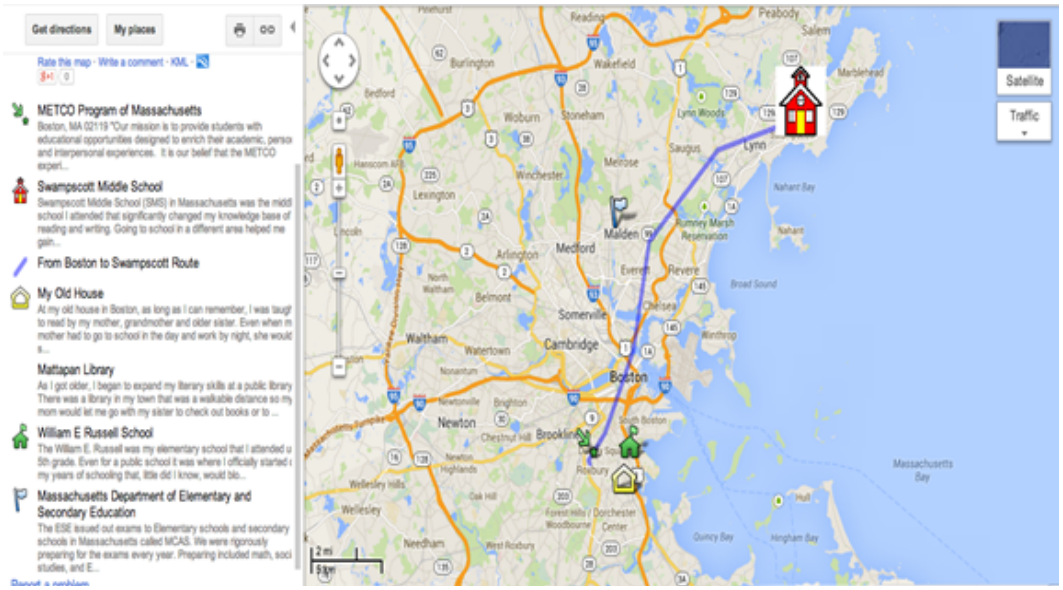


Figure 6: Angie's complete map.

CONCLUSION

Like Jacobs, Adams, and Morris, I hoped students would create spatial, as well as temporal, meanings from this mapping activity. Too often, the literacy narrative project ends at a chronological analysis—either one significant event is analyzed and reflected upon, or a chronology of development is retold through the eyes of the more mature, college student. However, we should push students "to think more about the ways in which they create meaning from the spaces around them" (Jacobs, Adams, and Morris 123). By telling the "spatial stories" of their literacy development through selected literacy sponsors, students are creating meaning; they are (re)creating their worlds and their "trade routes." As Jeff Rice notes, students create the database that is their map, represented in what they choose to locate; "each item can be drawn on to make meaning" ("Urban" 211). In turn, this mapped network of literacy sponsorship is "a shifting identity based on the individual or individuals who construct it. It is a spatial knowledge made out of the communal relationships between the personal and the place" (214). More simply, as Rice writes,"Identity is not fixed; it is moving" (*Digital* 6).

Such moving complicates our understanding of infrastructure, as it relates to literacy sponsorship and reciprocity. The act of mapping one's literacy sponsorship relies on developing an infrastructural

framework, a framework that accounts for the when *and* the where of one's literacy experiences. What we see in Angie's map is not the inner city experience, but a snapshot of her literacy experience, and the disparate elements (human and non-human) that impact such a snapshot. Even a limited map allows viewers and writers to move beyond a one-way or two-way reciprocal relationship placed on a map. Rather, reciprocity is re-negotiated and re-mapped over time and place; in some ways, we see the beginnings of a networked reciprocity reflected in these maps and trade routes. As Dodge remarks, "[m]aps provide graphical ideation which renders a place, a phenomenon or a process visible" (115). Mapping supplements and complicates a traditional literacy narrative, unpacking literacy sponsorship, as well as narrative, while students produce digital writing. This approach is illustrated in a student's final exam response pointing to how one might address literacy divides: "The city already addresses these situations with other programs but doesn't take the time to think about the other pressing issues (such as gang violence and especially the 'grandparents as parents' issues) that contribute to the other vast issues that negatively impact the community as a whole and literacy development of each person residing in it." This final exam response, as well as the project as a whole, recalls Reynolds's concern that writers need to be more aware of, and account for, "their own locatedness" while also acknowledging "differences in people's sociospatial worlds and their unequal access to modes of travel" (*Geographies* 133, 140). Lisa traveled throughout the country by car and airplane, while Angie traveled to the suburbs, and June traveled to a summer swim and tennis camp. For some students, this acknowledgement of traveling between literacy infrastructures involves traveling to uncomfortable or new places, such as Mallory's experience journeying from Catholicism to Judaism, that, while within the same geographic region, feel farther away than foreign lands.

"The act of mapping one's literacy sponsorship relies on developing an infrastructural framework, a framework that accounts for the when and the where of one's literacy experiences. What we see in Angie's map is not the inner city experience, but a snapshot of her literacy experience, and the disparate elements (human and non-human) that impact such a snapshot."

At the theoretical level, I hoped students' analysis and production of maps would illustrate "trade routes," since

> traditional literacy or . . . digital literacy is deeply tied to economic forces and multiple contexts of culture, politics, and location. Understanding those forces and contexts is crucial to being able to appreciate individual literacy practices involving one or the other technologies of literacy. (Pandey 256)

Concepts such as the digital divide, underperforming schools, and economically-challenged neighborhoods are intertwined within each of our experiences and mapping, I contend, helps make those concepts real—the activity offers those concepts a where and a when. The infrastructure underlying our stories, including stories of literacy development, may at times be overlooked if we

focus on progress narratives and if we position reciprocity as a dyadic relationship between sponsor and sponsored, removed from the trade routes of our lives. Instead, as Jennifer Trainor contends, we need to account for both the geographic and the temporal. When a student argued for a particular approach to a new literacy center in an economically-depressed part of the state based on child and adult literacy levels, location vis-à-vis needy residents, and services beyond those strictly–related to literacy, she was moving beyond her story and seeing her story in relationship to other stories and to other situations of sponsorship, to other infrastructures. Echoing these concerns, another student passionately argued for better attention to the hours of service for literacy centers, showing how closing times must match all residents' needs and life situations. Students begin to see literacy beyond the academic acquiring of reading and writing, but rather as a complicated interplay of a place and a time.

At the pragmatic level, projects such as this echo Sorapure's interest in information visualization applications:

> [A]ssignments that draw on [information visualization] applications open up new possibilities for writing teachers to present the standard modes of analysis, personal writing, and argumentation in the context of data-driven inquiries. By incorporating these kinds of assignments, we can help prepare students to be savvy participants in the world of Web 2.0 as well as critically informed undergraduates and professionals. (68-9)

This is more than we typically ask of the literacy narrative genre and, perhaps, more than we ask of the typical first-year writing class. But, the infrastructural framework/s hiding behind all literacy narratives deserves more attention. As Grabill notes, this is part of showing why and how digital writing matters: "our challenge is to figure out how to be useful to those interested in leveraging these new writing platforms with thoughtfulness and power." The geographic and digital turns in Composition Studies present new paths for us to embrace and travel with our students—especially if those paths lead to international airports, boarding schools, movie theaters, and grandparents' houses. Much good can be found in the reflective personal writing of literacy narratives, and a quick glance through the WPA-L email responses to "Is the literacy narrative dead?" will find such positive reports. Yet, the initial query, spurred by a publishing representative's comment on the passing of the literacy narrative genre, only reinforces our need to map the "trade routes" of our own field's literacy genres, as well as our students.

NOTES

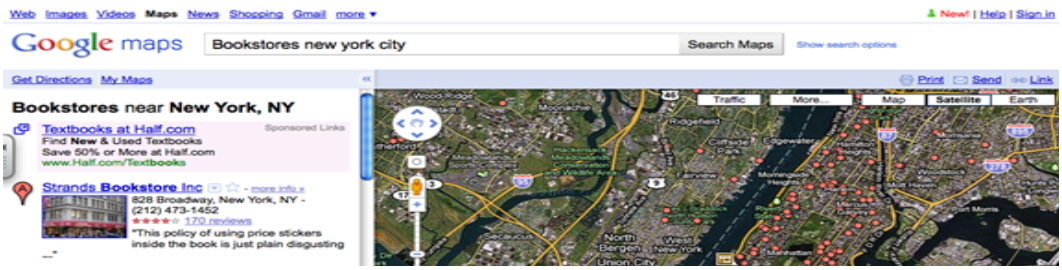
[1] Throughout the article, pseudonyms have replaced students' actual names. In addition, the figures included in the article are screenshots of their maps, preventing readers from accessing the specific maps.

[2] Essentially, Web 2.0 represents the advent of web applications relying on collaboration, sharing, and user-generated content. Within recent digital writing scholarship, Web 2.0 has received significant attention, especially as it applies to the teaching of writing. For examples of recent work examining Web 2.0, see Vie, Arola, Dilger, Purdy, Karper, and Portman-Daley.

[3] With a class of over twenty students, I could not include all student maps. My reflections on the mapping project in general encompass a concern for all of the maps. Moreover, I refer to other locations and maps beyond those included. I did not approach this course or assignment within a research project, complete with research questions and research methods. As a reflection on pedagogical practice, this article includes select maps available to me after the course's completion.

APPENDIX A

Project 1: Google (Literacy) Map Assignment



Harvey Graff maintains that place of birth and place of residence are key aspects to understanding literacy levels. Essentially, where and when you were born play key roles in your literacy development. As we've discussed in class, children born today will have a much different exposure to literacy technologies than you may have experienced as a child. This project asks you to create a personal literacy map for a particular location in your life. Once you choose a location, you will then mark key places, people, etc. You will also create a written entry (up to 1200 words) for each marker; remember that you should provide context and detail for each entry. Additionally, you can include photographs and video as part of your map. You will also create an introduction for the map and the changes the map may reflect—or, what the places say about you and how they impacted your literacy development.

These maps will be completed with software such as Google Maps, allowing for sharing of maps as well as multimedia. We will spend time in class familiarizing ourselves with Google Maps. In the meantime, you can check Google Maps out at: http://maps.google.com/. There is also a video on how to use MyMaps here: http://maps.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=62843. The first step is ensuring you have a Google account—if not, we will create one in class.

I will be using the following criteria in assessing your project:

- Significance of locations: Is the significance of a particular location, place, person clear to viewers?
- Variety of locations: Does the map include a variety of locations, including places and people?
- Connection to literacy: Does the map reflect a connection to literacy development?
- Use of technology: Does the map utilize various aspects of Google Maps, such as linking, visuals, etc.?
- Introduction: Does the introduction present the map as a coherent whole? Does it explain what you are trying to do with this map?

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Lean On: Collaboration and Struggle in Writing and Editing

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Jessica Restaino Montclair State University

"I can no more think of giving up our writerly ways than I could of giving up breathing … or eating."

—Andrea Lunsford to Lisa Ede, "Dear Lisa/Dear Andrea: On Friendship and Collaboration"

In January 2013, we published the edited collection *Unsustainable: Re-Imagining Community Literacy, Public Writing, Service-Learning and the University* (Lexington), a book that opens a needed conversation about failure, risk, and the complications of university/community writing partnerships. This isn't a negative book (we don't think so, anyway), but it is a gutsy one: our contributors explore their own best intentions as well as their greatest disappointments as community writing activists and scholars. Our project was the result of a three-year collaboration, one that began with an email and a request for feedback on an essay draft and has extended over more emails than either of us can count, many hours on the phone, and only a hard-to-believe handful of face-to-face meetings. Over time, we've come to know each other as collaborators and writers, but also as women, mothers, and friends. Perhaps most importantly, for our purposes here, our work has taught us how to be more effective collaborators and to value and understand the specific scholarly gifts (and challenges) of writing and thinking together. These lessons, we believe, have broader implications for how we understand university/community writing partnerships and our efforts as scholar practitioners.

We believe that our collaboration represents the kind of literacy sponsorship that Morris Young describes in his symposium essay, "Sponsoring Literacy Studies." Young argues that narratives of literacy can be understood in two ways: "'grand narratives' [that are] foundational to the field" and "'little narratives' [that create] personal touchstones" in our lives to inspire, support, or encourage us (10). Young argues that these "little narratives," these personal connections and strong friendships, give us the courage we need to develop meaningful research agendas:

While we may consider our professional work as studying literacy and perhaps sponsoring

> the further study of literacy through our research, we should also recognize that we are sponsoring literacy studies through the personal connections and relationships that develop in our curricular and extracurricular spaces and in the gestures that are often more than a simple act of acknowledgement or kindness. (14)

Our book project and our collaboration allow us to think through Young's argument about grand and little narratives. We interrogate the gold standard of long-term sustainability in university/community writing partnerships, arguing instead for an alternate "grand narrative," one which reassigns value to short term collaborations, to good ideas that perhaps yield small, if bright, rewards. Interestingly, in exploring the ebb and flow of our own collaboration—our "little narrative" over these last years—we have found a compromise of sorts, a version of "sustainability" that is at once "long-term" and also a series of starts and stops. Similar patterns are traceable in some of our contributors' stories in *Unsustainable*, suggesting that the work of collaboration is best understood, and practiced, as an exercise in possibility (if not always productivity), a combination of steps forward and backward. Our collaboration parallels, for us, the themes embedded in *Unsustainable*—risk, trust, partnership, complication—and, also at the core of all university/community writing partnerships, emphasizes the inseparability of work and home. As we read and think about Young's symposium essay, we find in both our own work as collaborators and in the collection, itself a synthesis of the professional/public and the personal, an overlapping of "grand" and "little" narratives.

Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford's recent reflections on their longstanding collaboration offer an insightful window into the everyday practices and conditions that undergird the creation of sustained and foundational work. Writing broadly about feminist theory and subjectivity, they explain:

> From a feminist vantage point, however, it is impossible to take the subjectivity of the rhetor for granted, impossible not to locate that subjectivity within the larger context of personal, social, economic, cultural, and ideological forces …. Feminist theory has consistently challenged any public/private distinction, arguing that knowledge based in the personal, in lived experience, be valued and accepted as important and significant. ("Border Crossings" 286)

We are most easily able to trace this collapsing of the public/private in our long and varied email threads over the years. Since the mid-1990s, scholarly examinations of email—its rhetorical potential and also its limitations—have helped to situate us intellectually within a medium we have long-adopted as a kind of second communicative skin. Certainly, much of our friendship and collaboration has unfolded on screen, email after email.[1] Consequently, we look with some envy (okay, a lot of envy) at Lunsford and Ede's description of their own experiences collapsing the professional and the personal, which they describe in "Collaboration and Compromise: The Fine Art of Writing with a Friend" as actually, really "being together" in the same workspace:

> One powerful impetus, and subsequent reinforcement, for our collaboration is our friendship. We enjoy being together, and even though we spend much of the brief periods

> we're together—a weekend during the term, four to six days over Christmas, a luxurious two weeks in summer—working, we always find time for jokes, shopping sprees for exotic foods, and laughter-filled late-night dinners." (37)

These descriptions of working and playing together emphasize the very "personal touchstones" of which Young writes, particularly since these interactions are in fact supporting the production of texts that have informed the ongoing work of scholars in rhetoric and composition.

While we certainly have found joy in working together, we have typically had very little time to actually be together. Our route to friendship was far more circuitous and, since we met through email, any potential for deeper connection—for our own personal touchstones—had to happen in the sometimes-sterile space of an email message. However, as we review our extensive email dialogue, we are able to trace an unfolding easiness and play in our written conversations. It was actually grammar, Jess's (admitted) overuse of punctuation (!!?!!), her beloved dashes (—) that introduced Laurie to Jess's irreverent and wicked sense of humor. In essence, we established a kind of working chemistry through email correspondence, one that allowed for a friendship to grow, in writing, alongside our editing partnership.

There's an interesting parallel here, one which perhaps made the move into working together as editors and writers easier: since our most reliable source for "knowing" each other was email, there was perhaps less transition to make as we moved from one writing activity to another. This is particularly interesting to consider in light of Young's emphasis on the interwoven relationship between theories of literacy and the many narratives that inspire these broader concepts. Young warns us that "grand conclusions about the consequences and power of literacy [can] become more significant than understanding actual practices" (12). We still cannot quite believe that we have only met in person a handful of times, and we certainly took an enormous risk by uniting our publishing agendas when both us of were facing the tenure/promotion hurdle. However, in many ways, our emails took on a life of their own and, at least in the first year of our work on *Unsustainable*, comprised the bulk of our writing to and for each other, especially while we edited. Our relationship was at the center of these writing practices, and how we read and responded to emails has come to represent some of the underlying themes and issues embedded in the project itself. As we read over this correspondence, we find the threads of hope, inspiration, and support that we offered each other. Here is one email from Jess to Laurie in late 2010:

> Hey—
> I have lots to write on all this--so I'm just writing you to tell you that I will write you—if that makes sense ... prob sometime tomorrow night or Tues—! Anyway—glad you're on board-—and we'll talk logistics-—tenure and all-—more soon,
> J (Restaino, 10 Oct. 2010)

This email is about writing, making plans to write, a very loose timeline (read: flexible), logistics,

tenure, and more. At once, it says everything and nothing, but at the heart, Jess is sending out encouragement and carving out the next, tenuous step in our long climb together. When our lives felt most chaotic, it was so important to pave the way for the next tiny step in the process, and we began to trust each other, to believe in our improbable partnership, so much that these emails were enough to prod us past the latest disappointment or insurmountable challenge. Dashes and ellipses here play a subtle, though powerful, role in communicating continuation, an encouraging incompleteness, an affirmation that we are not done. Jess makes a commitment here that there is more to come.

In "After Tactics, What Comes Next?", published in *Unsustainable*, Paula Mathieu reflects on the end of her partnership with Boston's street newspaper, *Spare Change*, and her reaction to an email sent by the board president expressing regret about her decision to leave the board. She writes:

> At that time, the balance of new motherhood and academic work seemed all I could manage, so I didn't respond. Frankly, I didn't know what to say or how to feel. Now, with my daughter starting preschool and me reflecting on my street-paper work through this writing, I decided to email back, apologetically and tentatively, thanking him for the email and saying hello. That started a conversation via email about me possibly getting involved with the organization again. (30)

What's so notable here for us is not the simple fact of a shared medium, but rather that email serves that familiar function of tentative link, a glimmering "maybe" in the digital universe. It's not a meeting—though it could lead to one; it's not a formal piece of academic writing—though certainly it could promise that an attachment is soon to follow; it's surely not bold like a phone call—though it could open a dialogue ultimately too busy and bantering for typing fingers alone. In Mathieu's case, a meeting would follow after email laid a reassuring foundation. This reassurance is built on personal connection, the "touchstones" or little narratives about which Young writes, and makes possible further, perhaps "grander" collaboration. In our work throughout *Unsustainable* (and still, as we've worked on this piece), we have used email to offer such continuous reassurance, especially when the work was not yet done, when one of us was still toiling, in process. Email has become a way of charting our own incremental course. The ebb and flow of community writing work discussed in our book often follows a similar trajectory, marked by starts and stops that are navigated through mutual assurances, the sewing together of many little narratives.

WHAT WE BECAME: A COLLABORATION THAT HELD US TOGETHER

In his "Afterword" to our collection, Eli Goldblatt reflects on the nature of compassion, particularly as it is bound up in a certain acceptance of failure. When we act based "on the needs of the other," we do not do so only when success is guaranteed (Goldblatt 264). In fact, we typically can't know the outcome of even our best-intended actions: which will yield positive results, which

might uncover new obstacles or serve to reroute our original goals. Goldblatt writes, "Nothing we do is permanent. Setbacks and disappointments can sustain us as much as achievements if we manage to hear compassion's necessary music" (266). Being responsive to our potential collaborators, either as writers, editors, or community activists, requires personal connection and receptivity. This surely necessitates the kind of authentic listening that Linda Flower describes so eloquently, that we might understand the needs for flexibility when the realities of the non-profit world meet the realities of the academic world.[2] Here again we see a necessary overlapping of the personal and the professional, creating, for Young, "a complex web of relationships that may sustain literate action" (10).

Our own relationship strengthened with each communication, even when our interaction didn't yield immediate reward. As we began to trust each other, to know that each would—eventually—come through if she said she would (however many "I'm-writing-to-say-I'll-write" emails in between actual drafts), we entered into a kind of "seesaw" effect where, following the writing/editing "turn taking" with our book project, our frustrations and focus and confidence seemed, too, to alternate. Just as one hit a low point, the other seemed to produce and pick up the pace; as one lost confidence, the other had a burst of it and some to share. In the same way we began to trust that we could, together, produce *physical* texts via collaborative writing and editing, so too did we each begin to trust in the other for delivery of the psyche, as well. Because our collaboration on *Unsustainable* extended for three years, there was plenty of doubt and frustration on our journey. Interestingly, the possibility of starts and stops is also reflected in contributors' stories in our collection, drawing a compelling parallel between our work of co-editing and the dynamics of university/community writing partnerships. As Mathieu writes:

> Committing oneself to starting a project also means inevitably facing an ending, sometimes a painful one. Tactical work requires—or at least signs us up for—a continual act of reinvention, of starting from scratch, going back to square one and having the courage to face the possibility of work not happening, but hoping and working so it will. And sometimes things come full circle. (18)

This notion of coming "full circle," particularly as the prospect of failure looms, takes shape in our email exchanges and carries at once the prospect of professional growth and personal vulnerability. Often, one of us faltered as the other rallied. Here, Jess writes upon hearing from Laurie just as her personal life—the morning rush, children, a mischievous cat—collides with her professional responsibilities:

> Hey L-
> It's so helpful to work in pairs, I have to say....because I showed up to work today ready to cancel my classes, take the bus into the city, and roam around Manhattan aimlessly.... one of those days (the morning started with the cat peeing on Abby's backpack; naturally I discovered this just as I was shoving her lunch in it, moments before it was time to leave).... and, anyway, here you are...picking me up! Thanks! (Restaino, 27 Oct. 2010)

These were the scrappy moments—the moments when all seemed lost and the tenuous thread holding us to the daily routine, the teaching, mothering, writing—it all threatened to snap—when we opened an email, and were reminded that the process had value and was worth the struggle. Even the most ridiculous writing/teaching/parenting moments could provide, if not joy, at least some humor, and with the humor, the energy, and wherewithal, to go forward. Here is an email from Laurie to Jess just as we were close to securing a publisher for the book, expressing hope amidst chaos:

> So exciting! I'm thrilled, and excited, and glad—what a way to make my day! It sounds like you are as crazy as me. I took Cody to a birthday party, so proud to have a present all wrapped, and find the restaurant OK, and then we see another kid, with his mom, IN COSTUME. Because I forgot that it was a costume party. So Cody freaks out, and says he won't go. So I promise to find him a costume on the street we are walking down toward the restaurant, and I see a fabric store, and plead with the owner to help. We find some pirate fabric to make a cape and an eye patch, and he LOVED it. Geesh. Really, though, so excited about the press. I feel silly that I haven't yet contacted XXX Press, but it looks like XXXX might be a good fit. Yahoo! Laurie. (Cella, 7 Dec. 2010)

On our own, these struggles felt both trivial and tremendous; parenting young children requires stamina, endless energy, and a durable sense of humor. The chance to share, to encourage and to laugh with each other made our work together not a chore, or another item on the "To Do" list, but rather a true pleasure and relief, a wellspring of encouragement during a particularly intense period of writing, teaching, mothering and then, writing again. In many ways we found that our work was happening while we were moving through our daily lives in ways that naturally moved us to share both, our thinking about work and our moments of in-between, the circumstances and tasks which either interrupted our writing and editing work, or which sometimes served as an unlikely conduit for an idea. These "zig zag" patterns between the personal and the professional are captured in an email flurry from Jess, infant by her side, one Saturday early in the project:

9:00 AM:

> Thalia literally just bit my leg while I'm typing this. Guess I've ignored her enough—keep me posted on all—!
>
> J (Restaino, 6 Nov. 2010)

Later that day, 3:00 pm:

> Just a quick follow up—I'm wondering if one of the XXXX Press series might be a good match for our book? (Restaino 6 Nov. 2010)

Whether we were drafting out proposals, editing the contributors' essays, or drafting our own essays, we knew that time was short, that responding via email would be quick, efficient, and even give us

a brief moment to vent about the bites, scrapes, snack requests, and hugs that fill our days. In this email, Jess brainstormed about the editing process until time ran short—but that didn't mean she stopped thinking as she ran errands later that afternoon. In between sports practices and dinner, she had a second to throw out one more idea, one more way to move the project forward. In essence, our collaboration was able to yield a longer project perhaps because it was not defined by professional boundaries alone. To move forward together at that moment, we needed to weave together our sometimes competing personal and professional realities.

PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE "LITTLE NARRATIVES" IN OUR LIVES

Our collaboration as writers and editors has taught us to embrace an uncertain kind of progress, one that starts and stops, races and slows, in ways that mirror the rhythm of university/community partnerships. In reflecting on Morris Young's symposium essay, we see our own experience as inseparable from both "big" and "little" narratives. We have reached some overarching conclusions in our work together about community writing and the partnerships that surround it. But these larger arguments have been made possible, held up, really, by our personal touchstones, the small building blocks of our working relationship that continue to create space in which we can think together. Our work to publish *Unsustainable: Re-imagining Community Literacy, Public Writing, Service-Learning, and the University* remains—in both the tumult of the effort itself and the messages in the book's pages—a tremendous source of instruction in embracing non-linearity, and the many small stories that have allowed for our very own grand narrative.

As more writers and scholars move forward on the publishing trajectory made possible by those like Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, a variety of both practical and theoretical implications for collaborative work take shape. Our work together has been enlivened by our friendship, as our friendship has been enriched by our collaborative play—and so we have some hands-on advice for those whose professional lives are shaped by the need to publish academic work. When we embark on a collaborative project, the first practical difference is that the writing process will move at a dramatically slower pace, and so first time collaborators will need to create a flexible understanding of deadlines and stopping points in order to limit frustration and disappointment. Before embarking on a collaborative project, writers who have tight professional deadlines need to recognize the risk involved and make peace with an adjusted timeline. While at first this new flexibility might seem fraught with risk and uncertainty, in fact, this type of flexibility allows for increased creativity and insight.

Moving past the risk associated with an adjusted timeline, we believe that many writers are still afraid to work collaboratively because they are afraid to lose their own voice in their work. On the contrary, we have found that the chemistry of a good professional friendship can become the bedrock of a fabulous article. Our work together has shown us that chemistry—at the heart of any

strong friendship—can bring true imaginative play into the writing process. It requires some risk, some waiting, some willingness to reshape what might have felt done, but we have the advantage of our words being reflected back as us with clearer meaning, revised by someone who can and does sometimes finish our sentences. Our editing and our writing has been enriched by the play and even the joy of our late night phone calls, the laughter that comes with sharing parenting trials, administrative woes, and family vacations. Our commitment to each other—to support each other despite (and because of) our messy cars and messier lives—echoes Lunsford and Ede's emphasis on the joy that comes from being together. That joy informs their written work, as it informs ours, and continues to deepen our understanding and respect for each other, and the work we create together.

The last practical implication that comes of working collaboratively is perhaps the most valuable for those still facing the challenge of finding a permanent position or facing the tenure and promotion hurdle. Finding the time to research and write about meaningful projects can feel almost impossible, especially when balancing a heavy teaching load and/or the many chaotic (and lovely) demands of parenting. Working collaboratively can provide desperate writers with the support and encouragement they need when all feels lost. Just as creative inspiration ebbs and flows in a single writer, the stamina needed for a large project, like the one we faced as co-editors of a book, can be generated together, and shared as each writer faces the demands of her individual life. When Jess felt lost, Laurie sent a revised text, words of encouragement, and joy over the news of a publishing contract. Likewise, when Laurie was at a low, Jess sent her the encouragement she needed to face the next step in the writing process. Collaborative relationships have the power to sustain us in the face of a truly anxiety-inducing job market and tenure process. As writers, we must have the courage to build on our personal and professional connections so that we can better face the demands of our writing lives.

These practical suggestions have as their roots the theoretical implications at the core of *Unsustainable.* As our contributors show through their own little narratives, the big story is about embracing non-linearity and unpredictability in our work as scholars and practitioners working to build new and sometimes non-traditional connections between university and community. Accordingly, we have a responsibility to pose questions for which we sometimes do not have immediate answers, and to adjust these questions and our expectations as we feel shifts in the needs and goals of our partners. We might ask: In what ways does a longer-than-planned gap in the completion of a community-based project offer opportunities to re-see our original goals? How does our understanding of the "problems" faced by a community organization change when we engage in such re-seeing? To what extent does time thus serve us as scholars who might have the opportunity to watch a community partner's needs take new shape, shifting as influences and critical factors come and go? What are the potential benefits of intellectual and practical openness to more flexible timelines in our own writing as scholars of community literacy? Perhaps most importantly, how might we reassess and reimagine all those particular projects that end abruptly, seemingly unfinished, a disappointment on the surface of our original vision? The contributors

to *Unsustainable* offer numerous angles from which to approach these questions, emphasizing the need for variability in our work both inside and outside university walls. Our field needs to continue to share these stories and to celebrate the ways in which their unevenness might contribute to how we think about our scholarly/community work. We look forward to hearing from others whose textured stories of unpredictability allow for revision and innovation in our scholarship and our practice.

NOTES

[1] For a fuller discussion of email as a rhetorical, communicative mode, see especially Scott, Longo, and Wills; as well as work by Ishii on satisfaction with email communication across workplace environments and tasks.

[2] See especially Flower's *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*.

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Literacy as a Legislative and Judicial Trope

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> Literacy itself can be understood only in its social and political context, and that context, once the mythology has been stripped away, can be seen as one of entrenched class structure in which those who have power have a vested interest in keeping it.
>
> —J. Elspeth Stuckey, *The Violence of Literacy*, vii

In his *LiCS* symposium article, "The Legacies of Literacy Studies," Harvey J. Graff argues that the field of literacy studies "lack[s] adequate critical treatments of the contradictory place literacy holds in popular, school, familiar, and public cultures" (16). Drawing on Graff, this article offers an analysis of the ways in which literacy has held a "contradictory place" in definitions created specifically about literacy testing by the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 and subsequently by the United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS). This analysis addresses the complex and problematic ways in which literacy and literacy testing has been utilized as a trope for and by the SCOTUS.

When I refer to literacy as a trope, I mean that literacy can serve as a reoccurring theme, example, case, or metaphor. The trope most often used for literacy corresponds to Sylvia Scribner's metaphor of literacy as power, which she defines as one that "emphasizes a relationship between literacy and group or community advancement" (11). This literacy trope reflects what Graff calls the Literacy Myth—"the assumption that literacy and progress [are] identical" (*Literacy* 5)—or what Catherine Prendergast describes as "the flawed but rhetorically seductive and seemingly deathless argument that literacy will guarantee equality of opportunity, moral growth, and financial security and ensure the democratic participation of all individuals in society, regardless of other facts" (*Literacy* 4). Graff's and Prendergast's comments help us see the various ways literacy can be misunderstood and oversimplified.

I first noticed this misunderstanding of literacy when I studied Amish literacy. In *Wisconsin v. Yoder,* the SCOTUS found that requiring Amish children to attend public, non-Amish schools violates their Second Amendment rights. In the dissenting opinion, Justice William O. Douglas wrote about the purposes of literacy and education in ways that focused only on the jobs students may have in the future. Studying this case led me to wonder if this representation was part of a trend in the Supreme Court. To initiate this research, I reviewed Supreme Court case arguments, decisions,

and opinions since 1915 for terms like literacy, reading, and writing. Most cases that referenced or involved literacy were focused on voting rights, literacy tests for voting, and challenges to the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which banned literacy tests as a requirement for voting. This analysis revealed trends: before the Voting Rights Act, literacy was deployed as autonomous and neutral; after the VRA, literacy is characterized in ways that call to mind Scribner's metaphor of "literacy as power," suggesting an ideological understanding of literacy. I turn to this analysis now and conclude with what these legal understandings might mean post-Shelby, following challenges to the Voting Rights Act.

THE EARLY YEARS: LITERACY TESTS AND THE SUPREME COURT, 1915 and 1959

The first record of literacy tests as a topic of debate in the SCOTUS appears in the 1915 decision on *Guinn v. United States*. The issue at hand in this case was the use of the "Grandfather Clause," a rule employed by many states, in this case Oklahoma, that waived the literacy test requirement for anyone whose grandfather had voted. The Court was asked to consider, first, whether Oklahoma's amendment responsible for creating the Grandfather Clause was valid, and second, whether the Amendment was created in order to deny rights to African Americans who were otherwise qualified to vote. The Court unanimously found this clause to be unconstitutional and ruled against it, even though, as historian J. Morgan Kousser shows, this move was not "particularly progressive" and "had no practical effect" (142). States like Oklahoma were able, Kousser argues, to continue "administrative discrimination without further legal challenge," and most states' Grandfather Clauses had expired by the time of the Court's decision in 1915 (142). Chief Justice Edward D. White, the son of a slaveholding sugar farmer and a former Confederate soldier and prisoner of war from Louisiana, wrote the Court's majority opinion. In the opening paragraph, White writes that

> officers of the State of Oklahoma . . . conspired unlawfully, willfully, and fraudulently to deprive certain negro citizens, on account of their race and color, of a right to vote at a general election held in that State in 1910, they being entitled to vote under the state law, and which right was secured to them by the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

In other words, White argues that the literacy test was used as a tool to deny the rightful vote to citizens. In a democratic society, of course, a citizen exercises power through voting. We can understand White's language through Denny Taylor's reminder that "if you have power and privilege in society, literacy can be used to maintain your social status. You can use print to your advantage and to the disadvantage of others" (10). Justice Douglas's words illustrate a point Kate Vieira makes in her *LiCS* symposium article "On the Social Consequences of Literacy" that literacy can be seen as "a navigational technology that opens up some paths and closes off others, that orients and disorients, that routes and often reroutes" (27). Vieira further explains that literacy can serve as an "obstacle"

and often "oppresses, disenfranchises, [and] regulates" (28).

There are three distinctive kinds of literacy tests that were designed to limit voting access: tests that measured knowledge of civics or government, tests of character, and tests designed to be failed.[1] The content of the literacy tests themselves are an important contextual element in understanding the Supreme Court's treatment of the tests. Most often, literacy tests required for voting were actually tests in civics. A 1965 literacy test given in Alabama and archived by the Civil Rights Movement Veterans (CRMV), for example, asks questions such as: "What body can try impeachments of the president of the United States?" or "Name the attorney general of the United States."

In many states, including Mississippi, "good moral character"—the second category of voting tests—could exempt a potential voter from the literacy test requirement or was used as a requirement for voting. The three-page application for voting used in the mid 1950s in Mississippi consists of several questions about whether or not the applicant is a church leader; number sixteen asks "Are you a minister of the gospel in charge of an organized church, or the wife of such a minister?" Susan Kates, in her article "Literacy, Voting Rights, and the Citizenship Schools in the South, 1957-70" shows that during this era being "of good moral character" was often used as an exception or alternative for the literacy tests mostly "to ensure that illiterate whites were not disenfranchised" (480). Similarly, there are five different questions about employment. According to voting laws prior to the 1965 VRA, employment is similarly a measurement of "good character" and entitlement to voting, and this philosophy is reflected in Mississippi's application for registration. This requirement is consistent with Graff's description of the belief "that education could prevent criminality, if not cure it, and was integral" (*Literacy* 235). This concept of tying literacy to morality reflects what Graff calls "the moral bases of literacy" which is related to what Graff describes as "the moral economy," or a society in which literacy is considered a resource that a nation needs to "increase its material prosperity" (*Literacy* 25).

The final category of literacy tests is the category designed to be failed. The state of Texas, for example, famously required applicants to answer one question: how many bubbles are in a bar of soap? Similarly, Louisiana's 1963-1964 test, archived by the CRMV, requires applicants to follow instructions such as "In the space below, write the word "noise" backwards and place a dot over what would be its second letter should it have been written forward" and "Place a cross over the tenth letter in this line, a line under the first space in this sentence, and a circle around the last the in the second line of this sentence." Again, applicants were expected to complete this test in ten minutes and were not permitted to miss a single question. The confusing nature of the questions plus the strict time limit indicates that the writers of this test did not intend for it to be passed.

The subject of literacy tests appeared again before the Supreme Court 44 years after *Guinn v. United States* in 1959 with *Lassiter v. Northampton County Board of Elections*. In this case, an African American citizen in North Carolina sued to have literacy tests declared unconstitutional. As a result, the SCOTUS was asked to answer two questions: first, can a state apply a literacy test to voters,

and second, does a literacy standard violate the Fifteenth Amendment of the US Constitution? The Court noted that the literacy test was part of a provision of the North Carolina Constitution and found that states' literacy tests were acceptable as long as *every* potential voter was required to take the test. In other words, according to the Court, the test could no longer be required only of African American voters. This decision was consistent with contemporaneous "separate but equal" policies, but of course the tests, used for intimidation and harassment, were not equal.

The *Lassiter* Opinion was written by Justice William O. Douglas who, in defense of the practices surrounding literacy tests, writes that states require many stipulations for voters, including "[r]esidence requirements, age, [and] previous criminal record." He continues,

> The ability to read and write likewise has some relation to standards designed to promote intelligent use of the ballot. *Literacy and illiteracy are neutral on race, creed, color, and sex, as reports around the world show. Literacy and intelligence are obviously not synonymous.* Illiterate people may be intelligent voters. (emphasis mine)

In this opinion, Douglas framed race, creed, color, and sex as irrelevant to this case. All that mattered to the court, in this situation, was whether a voter was literate. As the argument shows, intelligence did not matter—only literacy. This makes sense when we consider that news at the time was disseminated exclusively by newspapers, so a voter who could read the newspaper—regardless of the intelligence of that voter—would be an informed voter. Literacy, in this case, was conceptualized as something that helped a literate person accomplish certain tasks, or as "functional." As Douglas wrote on behalf of the Warren Court, "in our society where newspapers, periodicals, books, and other printed matter canvass and debate campaign issues, a State might conclude that only those who are literate should exercise the franchise." In other words, to protect the literacy standard requirement was, in Douglas's mind, to ensure that voters would be informed on the relevant issues. This school of thought is echoed by Stevens, who shows that, at least theoretically, literacy standards have always been enacted "not because [literacy] was functionally related to intelligent voting but because a great deal of periodical information related to public matters was published at that level (6th- or 8th- grade) of reading difficulty" (84-5).

Douglas's statement that reading and writing are *neutral* tells us much about his understanding of literacy. In this understanding of literacy, literacy is universally accessible and is autonomous of local contexts. But literacy scholarship has demonstrated that literacy is "neither neutral, ambiguous, nor radically advantageous or liberating" (Graff, *Literacy* 19). Literacy scholarship tells us, to the contrary, that literacy's "value, in fact, depended heavily on other factors, from ascribed social characteristics such as ethnicity, sex, or race, to the institutional, social, economic, and cultural contexts in which it was manifest. The role of literacy in the life of an individual and society is contradictory and complex" (Graff, *Literacy* 19). In other words, context is important, and literacy is neither apolitical nor ahistorical. Douglas's assertion that literacy is neutral ignores the political, historical, and contextual nature of literacy and is consistent with what Brian V. Street calls the autonomous model of literacy—a model that "isolates literacy as an independent variable" (*Literacy*

3).

The Supreme Court never revisited literacy tests as a requirement for voting after *Guinn* and *Lassiter* because six years later, Congress passed the landmark *Voting Rights Act of 1965,* which among other things prohibited the use of literacy tests as a requirement for voter registration. In the next section, I outline and contextualize the VRA and show how literacy is represented in the legislation.

THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

Literacy is defined indirectly in the VRA through descriptions of literacy tests. Section four explicitly addresses the implementation of literacy tests, stating that "no citizen shall be denied the right to vote in any Federal, State, or local election because of his failure to comply with any test or device in any State." "Test or device" is later defined in subsection C as

> any requirement that a person as a prerequisite for voting or registration for voting (1) demonstrate the ability to read, write, understand, or interpret any matter, (2) demonstrate any educational achievement or his knowledge of any particular subject, (3) possess good moral character, or (4) prove his qualifications by the voucher of registered voters or member of any other class.

In subsection E, the Act states that as long as a potential voter has completed sixth grade in an established school in U.S. territory, even if the instruction in that school was not in English, that voter cannot be subjected to a literacy test.

In both of these subsections of the Act, the phrase used to describe the tests' intentions, and I argue to define literacy, is "read, write, understand, or interpret." This definition seems to privilege what is often referred to as "functional literacy" and can be defined, again as Scribner does, as "the level of proficiency necessary for effective performance in a range of settings and customary activities" (9). The writers of the Voting Rights Act seemed to operate under the assumption that if functional literacy can be tested, the test is not one to which a rightful citizen should be subjected.

The definition of literacy as the ability to "read, write, understand, or interpret" does not have an object—in other words, it is unclear *what* such a test would measure one's ability to "read, write, understand, and interpret." Text? Oral expression? Context and cultural influences are missing from the legislation's definition, which are important elements to consider since, as Scribner shows, "grasping what literacy 'is' inevitably involves social analysis" (8). Street's work is useful in analyzing the VRA in two ways: first, the fact that the VRA exists at all is a reflection of the ideological model, which he says "enables us to focus on the ways in which the apparent neutrality of literacy practices disguises their significance for the distribution of power in society" (431). Second, Street's autonomous model helps us understand the VRA's language, which treats literacy as "independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character" (432). In other words, the definition of literacy in the VRA ignores the

social context of literacy, which is important for defining and understanding what literacy is. The contradictory nature of the existence of the act and the language used in the act illustrates how complicated it is to legislate issues of literacy. This contradiction, it seems, can be seen in how the SCOTUS interpreted literacy in the cases that followed the VRA.

Prior to the passing of the VRA, the Supreme Court could not or would not rule against literacy tests and treated literacy as, to borrow the court's term, "neutral." Once the VRA passed, literacy tests came to serve as a trope for discrimination disguised as bureaucracy in Court documents. After the VRA, literacy tests functioned as a trope in ways that resonate with Street's ideological model, J. Elspeth Stuckey's descriptions of literacy as violence, or Taylor's descriptions of "toxic" literacy. For example, language used in the 1980 case *Fullilove v. Klutznick,* which held that Congress could use its spending power to remedy past discrimination, reflects a belief that literacy tests were, to borrow Taylor's term, "toxic." Literacy tests were described by Drew S. Days, the Chief Lawyer for the Respondent, as something from which "discrimination flow[ed]." In 1982, E. Freeman Leverett, the attorney arguing on behalf of the appellants in *Rogers v. Lodge*, claimed that "in Burke County [Georgia] the evidence is that in the memory of no witness has any black person ever been unable to pass the literacy test." One justice (unidentified in the transcripts) challenged this claim, asking how many "negroes" had been elected to office in Burke County, to which Leverett had to admit "zero." Clearly, the justices in 1982 were unwilling to accept the idea that literacy tests were fair and enforced a conception of the tests as bureaucratic injustice, what we might call "literacy violence."

Legal cases have continued to invoke the injustices of literacy testing. In *Thornburg v. Gingles*, a 1986 case concerning voting and racial justice, attorney for the plaintiff Julius Chambers used the word "problems" to describe a situation in which literacy tests were used illegally in districts to intimidate potential African American voters despite the passing of the VRA. In the 1996 case *Morse v. Republican Party of Virginia*, the issue in question included the practice of holding a convention that required a $45 fee instead of a primary election. Justice Stephen Breyer compared this practice to literacy tests, asserting that in both cases, "only the white people can vote." In other words, the fee would serve as a deterrent for poor or minority registrants. In the 2000 age-discrimination case *Kimel v. Florida Board of Regents*, Barbara Underwood, the attorney who argued on behalf of the federal government, asserted that "as to the fact that this Court has not found an age discrimination unconstitutional, I'd like to point out that this is no different from what happened with literacy tests and voting." Similar parallels were drawn between literacy testing and discrimination based on disability by attorney for the petitioners Jeffrey S. Sutton in the 2001 case *Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama v. Garrett*. Sutton explicitly says "Let's draw an analogy to the race cases" and describes literacy tests as "problem[atic] and discriminat[ory]."

What these cases illustrate is that even in instances when literacy was not the subject of inquiry, the literacy test stands as a symbol that is rhetorically persuasive enough to use in the important arguments made in the SCOTUS, and this shift was a result of the VRA. Following the passing of the VRA, representatives of the court began to characterize literacy tests in ways that call

to mind Scribner's metaphor of "literacy as power"—those with power using literacy to prohibit others from gaining power. The justices' use of this new trope of literacy tests as discriminatory suggest they understood that literacy was used as a kind of violence—a way to prohibit citizens from exercising their right to vote—or as Kate Vieira puts it, as an "obstacle." This trope constructs literacy as ideological.

Forty-eight years after the VRA outlawed literacy tests for voting, these tests continue to be relevant following the SCOTUS's historic *Shelby County v. Holder* decision that struck down Section Five of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) in June 2013. Despite the fact that Congress passed four bipartisan expansions of the VRA over the last 43 years, including as recently as 2006, the SCOTUS voted 5-4 to find Section 4(b) unconstitutional. At the center of the arguments made before the Supreme Court on February 27, 2013 was the relevance and significance of the historic use of literacy tests to determine which voting districts required preclearance before making changes to voting districts, locations, and laws. Burt W. Rein, the attorney representing Shelby County, Alabama, argued that literacy tests could not be used to determine which districts were required to seek preclearance because the literacy test was outlawed by the Voting Rights Act. Justice Stephen G. Breyer tried to reframe this issue by comparing discriminatory voting practices to a plant disease. In his comparison, literacy tests were simply a symptom of the disease and he argues, "the disease is still there in the State." Although Attorney Rein attempted to push back, arguing that the needs do not justify the current burden of preclearance on specified districts, Breyer argued that "by and large (this statute) has worked" to create fairness in voting laws. Literacy tests were used to identify districts for preclearance status, but since literacy tests were outlawed by the VRA, opponents of preclearance argue that historic uses of literacy tests is no longer a relevant mechanism to determine singled-out districts.

Justice Breyer's characterization of literacy testing is consistent with that used in the SCOTUS in the years following the VRA. Breyer and the three justices who voted with him seem to characterize the literacy test as shorthand for discrimination. However, Breyer was in the minority. The other five justices see the VRA, as Justice Antonin Scalia referred to it, as a "racial entitlement" and violation of states' rights. This historic decision—and what Congress will do in response—serves as a culmination of the way in which literacy has been constructed and used as trope in judicial debates about voting rights.

It may be that the VRA's contradictory characterization of literacy, blending Street's autonomous and ideological models, contributed to the recent shift in the court's characterization of literacy tests and the VRA. More broadly, I suspect we are in the midst of a shift in our cultural attitudes regarding literacy in the United States. Graff reminds us of "the pervasive power of the literacy myth in American culture and politics," and this myth seems to be as powerful as ever ("Legacies" 16). Given that the United States, which functions under what Graff refers to as a "knowledge economy," is still emerging from The Great Recession, is it a coincidence that attitudes toward literacy, literacy tests, and access are shifting? After all, as Graff maintains, "[t]he … needs of a 'knowledge economy,' we easily forget,

do not bring employment and rewards to all those in search of fair work and pay, *regardless* of their ability to read and write across different media and different languages" ("Legacies" 16). When it comes to employment, access, education, and voting rights in the United States, investments are deep. This sense of exigence contributes to the further politicization of literacy, already highly politicized through the literacy myth. We must consider this history of literacy's conceptualization and use as a trope throughout modern American history so that we fully realize what is at stake when Congress responses to the SCOTUS *Shelby County* decision. And what is at stake? Access, equality, fairness, and the further perpetuation of the literacy myth to maintain power for those who are already successful in the knowledge economy.

NOTES

[1] The Civil Rights Movement Veterans website archives all the tests that are available on the Internet, including the 1965 Alabama Voter Literacy Test and Application Form, the 1963-64 Louisiana Voter Literacy Test, the South Carolina Voter Application (date unknown), and the mid-1950s Mississippi Voter Application and Literacy Test.

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